Table of Contents

1. The First Cawthon
2. Prophecy?
3. Thorn's Shooketh
4. Visit
5. Catching Up... Is That Thunder?
6. Lightning Is Mean
7. The Aftermath
8. The Stranger
9. The Creature
10. Briefing
11. Eat Well
12. Encounter
13. Alternate
14. What exactly in an inspiration room-- OH MY GOSH!
15. Twisted The Fox
16. Rogue, The Lesbian Badass
17. Exposed
18. An Answer and Another Choice
19. Forces Combined
20. Why won't you die?!
21. Transmission
22. Confrontation
23. My Boy...
24. The Nightmare Within
25. Rip And Tear
26. The Death of Deathbringer
27. FIGHT!
28. I Can Hear A Heartbeat...
29. Who Needs Kneecaps?
30. You Have The Right To Remain Silent!
31. I'll Kill You
32. There Is Still A Plan
33. Tensions High
34. It hurts...

35. 200 days
36. Sent From Above
37. That Wasn't Very Cash Money Of You
38. Confessions
39. Why Does Something Bad Happen Whenever There's Wholesomeness?
40. Not Cash Money At All
41. Deathbringer Has An Acid Trip
42. Tensions Even Higher
43. Die Metal Pimple Of DEATH!
44. The Nightmare Base
45. Escape
46. Entering The Panic Room
47. Preparations
48. The Panic Room
49. Just Checking Up On Things
50. Ah, Finally Some Wholesome-- Oh Come On!

The First Cawthon

In the beginning, there was nothing. Nothing but Cawthon, a lone creature in an infinite void of nothing. It is unknown how long there was nothing, maybe there was never nothing, but what we *do* know, is that Cawthon created the first something. He successfully created the first universe, though imperfect, and worked over millennia to make it absolute perfection. But, he knew that something was missing... Something... Something...

Life. And so, Cawthon created 10 tribes and gave each one a part of his power, giving each tribe their own type of power. Today, this power is known simply as Energy, of course, Cawthon was the only one who possessed the sacred Cawthon Energy. Then Cawthon expanded, creating the multiverse dimension by dimension until he was satisfied. The load of managing all the dimensions proved to be too much for Cawthon alone, so he created an 11th tribe, the Mystics, and gave them control over the dimensions.

For a long time, there was peace and utter perfection. But then *they* came; from all of the good, the bad came as a byproduct. The Nightmares were birthed from that darkness, and the moment Cawthon laid eyes on them, he could sense their limitless potential for evil.

However, instead of killing them, he set them aside, giving them their own land separate from the rest of the tribes. This proved to be the correct choice, as, within a couple of years, the Nightmares had completely sucked the life out of the land they inhabited and demanded more, which Cawthon granted them. This continued for far too long, the Nightmares multiplying and sucking the life out of their land faster and faster, until Cawthon made a deal with the Nightmares. He told them he would replenish their land once every year and that if they learned to behave themselves, he'd bless them with gifts; however, if they did *not* learn to behave themselves, he would eventually stop replenishing them altogether.

Unfortunately, the Nightmares were too arrogant to come to terms

with this and continued to suck the life out of their land faster and faster. Eventually, Cawthon had enough, and, as he promised, stopped replenishing them. The Nightmares began to die out until one Nightmare discovered something: *their* energy. Nightmare Energy, unlike the others, was purely destructive, serving no practical purpose other than killing. The Nightmares rose up against Cawthon, and after many years, managed to kill the god, as well as the mystics.

Cawthon's death caused a create imbalance in the multiverse, causing cataclysmic events on an hourly basis. After Cawthon's death, the Nightmare's conquered the rest of the world and eventually began to seep into other dimensions. For a long time, all hope seemed lost until another tribe rose against them. The god's death had caused his energy to disperse across the multiverse, and from his energy formed a new being, with Cawthon's sacred energy. They fought back the Nightmares, and in the end, sacrificed themselves to revive Cawthon, who drove the Nightmares a corner.

Peace was restored for a little, before the Nightmares rose up again, killing the new Cawthon, but not before he made a promise: Every time a Cawthon dies, another shall be born, so when the Nightmares rise again, so shall Cawthon; and when they rise once again, so shall Cawthon. And it was so.

This cycle continues to this day, as well as the war, in secret.

Prophecy?

Hello? Hello, hello? I'm not sure if this is going through, or if I'm just talking to myself here, but I have to pray to Cawthon that this works. Who I am is no longer important, the only thing is this: by the time this should reach you (if it works that is), **he** should already be there. But I must tell you, it was only the beginning. The gist is this:

A war beyond Pyrrhia is coming,
A war that has been brewing since the beginning of time,
A war so powerful, it birthed gods from its soldiers,

A god is coming, but not one of hope,
A god of destruction, of malevolence, of death,
He sees millennia ahead, do not try to outwit him,
He'll kill you on a whim, without hesitation,
His brawn moves mountains at the snap of a finger,
Powerful, psycho, clever, dangerous, broken,

But one shall rise from the mother,
Who's right to choose, was taken from her,
From her tears shall raise a force,
So powerful, not even destiny may take its course.

FIND THE MYSTIC

FIND-

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Communication Terminated~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~
Origin: Unknown

Speaker Identity: Unknown
Speaker gender: Male
Speaker species: Unknown
Speaker age: Unknown
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Do not investigate…

Continue mission as planned…

Thorn's Shooketh

It was a dull day in the Rainwing kingdom, filled with nothing but paperwork and complaint forms. As an alternative to having Glory sit in an uncomfortable chair for hours listening to complaints, Glory now sat in a less comfortable chair for hours *reading* complaints. It was tiring but at least it was more efficient than how they used to do it. *Now,* a dragon could submit up to 3 formal complaints a week, and Glory would go through all of them at the end of the week, addressing as many as possible.

Over the past 2 years, the Rainforest Kingdom had advanced in ways Glory had only hoped for. First of all, the "lazy Rainwing" lifestyle had been completely abandoned. Rainwing's were hardworking citizens, and many of them owned businesses in Kingdoms all over Pyrrhia. There was one Rainwing-Nightwing couple that requested immigration to the Skywing Kingdom just last week for a business for jelly made of roses. Glory had bought some, and it was so good she even sent some to the other queens to try.

This time, there was only one card in the "special" category, and it definitely caught Glory's eye.

Rumors are floating around of a strange, scavenger-shaped fox creature with one hand and red eyes. Rumors of sightings have gone up over the past few days, and what started as a stupid rumor is now a concerning problem. It usually wouldn't be a huge deal but I just had a dragonet and I want to forest to be safe for her, so please check it out.

It was a strange request. To investigate a scavenger fox thing. But it wouldn't hurt, so she wrote a letter that would authorize a search party.

"Hey, beautiful," Deabringer poked his head through the door of Glory's office with a smug look.

"Go away, Deathbringer, I'm busy," Glory sighed, but Deathbringer strolled in any way.

"Can't," Deathbringer said simply. "Urgent matter, in fact, so urgent, I'm disobeying my queen."

"You do that all the time, but get to it," Glory said, growing impatient with Deathbringer's shenanigans.

"Queen Thorn is here," Deathbringer said. "And as I mentioned, she said it's urgent."

Glory looked up from her papers and stared blankly for a moment before shooting upward, knocking envelopes onto the ground; Glory cursed herself, but Deathbringer didn't know if it was because of the news or her knocking over the letters.

"How long has she been here?" Glory asked frantically.

"About 30 min. or so," Deathbringer guessed. "She knew you were busy and insisted that she wait for you. I finally asserted that you would make time."

"Well let her in!" Glory half-yelled, and Deathbringer took a moment to smirk at her panic before fetching Queen Thorn. Glory had been a Queen for 3 years now, so she should be used to seeing the other Queens as equals; however, that was not the case. It really wasn't totally Glory's fault, being as young as she is, but with Queen Thorn and Queen Ruby, it was different; they radiated such power and composition, that it made Glory feel belittled in comparison. Yet, when Thorn came in this time, Glory didn't feel belittled, she felt worried. Why? It was many things, Thorn didn't look like herself; she looked... exhausted, to say the least. Her eyes were red with dark bags under them, and her posture was low and broken instead of high and proud.

"Queen Thorn," Glory said, bowing with respect; Thorn may be her aunt, but she was still Queen.

"I need to speak with you individually," Thorn said with a voice filled with anxiety.

"Of course," Glory said skeptically, this wasn't like any of her other visits. "Follow me."

Glory led Queen Thorn to the office where meetings between Queens were *usually* held, a soundproofed office with Glory's desk, which held paperwork, pencils, and various pictures of The Dragons Of Destiny, Glory and the Queens, as well as some with Glory and Deathbringer; the room also contained decorative plants and exotic pieces of art that Glory didn't particularly like but thought that it complemented the room.

"I-I'm sorry that this is s-so sudden but I just couldn't wait," Thorn says in a hurried, scared manner. "I-it's just that... I can barely speak..."

Thorn laughs awkwardly and trails off, rubbing both eyes with her talon.

"Thorn, you're scaring me," Glory said. Thorn was always so put-together and professional, most of the Queens were but Thorn was always the top-dragon when it came to professionalism. "Is everything ok?"

Thorn barked a laugh. "Of course not! Does it *look* like I'm ok?" Thorn closed her eyes and rubbed her temples with a long sigh. "I'm sorry, I haven't been sleeping lately and I think that I just discovered caffeine poisoning..."

"Thorn, what is happening?" Glory spoke with heavy concern. Thorn laughed for a moment, her eyes still closed and her body swaying side to side sleepily. As if she was startled awake Thorn's eyes shoot open and she reached for a leaf pack off of her back from which she pulls a notebook with large, thin letters spelling the words *Death Note.*

"This was on my desk when I came back from our last meeting," Thorn explained, throwing it down on the desk. "It was attached to a note. *Paid good money for this so let's see some results*, it read. *Let's see some results,* was written on the same page where it said *anyone whose name is written in this note shall die."*

Glory briefly flipped through the pages of the notebook. The first 5 pages or so were devoted to rules, many of which were grammatically incorrect and broken as if it was lazily translated

from one language to another. The next 50 or so pages were filled with names, some with descriptions of death and actions that are taken before death described underneath them. Most were written in scavenger languages, but a select few had names that Glory could understand. However, the thing that worried her the most was a name at the very end that looked like it had been written in fairly recently.

"I know what you're thinking," Thorn said. "But I did not write any names in it. I couldn't! But... You've met Brushfire. He's the guard I bring to all my meetings. He found it and, ever so determined to prove that it was all a hoax, wrote his own name..."-Queen Thorn was silent for a long moment, uncomfortably long-"40 seconds Glory. I swear it was 40 seconds on the dot."

"Moons above," Glory whispered. Was this really happening?

"It's untraceable," Thorn said. "Whoever gave me the notebook bought it off of someone completely off the grid! I have no idea what to do. I can't eat, I can't sleep, and I can't figure out this damn...!"

Thorn trailed off and threw her face into her talons, in complete distress and disarray. Glory wasn't sure how to react. How did something like this happen? There was no doubt that an animus made it, but who? Could it be someone Glory knew? No. The only animi are Turtle, Anemone, Sunny's father Stonemover, and Jerboa II. And of those dragons, only Turtle had children, and with both Turtle's passive genes and Kinkajou's overly friendly genes, they didn't have the *capacity* to make something like this.

Aside from that, Glory could rule out Stonemover right off the bat, since she didn't think Stonemover *could* use his magic, let alone for something this extravagant. Would Anemone? No, Anemone was too smart for that. She may be impulsive but she wouldn't do something so reckless. Turtle wouldn't let her, *Tsunami* wouldn't let her. That just leaves Jerboa II, who was somewhat mysterious, and though she claimed that she never used her abilities, no one could confirm this because she lived in isolation. However, Glory had briefly met the Sandwing and doubted that someone as mild and cautious as Jerboa II would do something like that.

"That's not all," Thorn spoke hesitantly. "There's... Something for you."

The Sandwing Queen slowly pulled out a strange metal hook. There was a short straight line, then the hook, which was almost a perfect half-circle before ending in a razor-sharp point. It radiated strange, violent energy so strong that Glory didn't want to touch it. Thorn suddenly grabbed Glory's talon urgently. "Be careful," Thorn warned one last time before she had to go, denying any questions from Glory as she chased her out the door.

"What was that about?" Deathbringer questioned, but Glory didn't know how to answer.

"Secret queen stuff," Glory said distantly, and Deathbringer seemed to understand that something was wrong. He put a talon on her shoulder.

"You ok?" Deathbringer asked, raising an eye ridge. *Wow his talon is warm,* Glory thought with a shock, and the scales in that area turned crimson for just a second before she shrugged his talon off.

"I'm fine," Glory said as if she was annoyed. If she told Deathbringer about it, he'd go into one of his phases where he was hypervigilant and wouldn't let Glory go anywhere ever. "I'm gonna go run a few errands, you gonna come with?"

"Of course, do you even know me? Let me just grab something."

"You'll catch up," and Glory was off, leaving Deathbringer to rush in and out of the building frantically.

As they flew through the sky, something watched them from the ground with a slight smile on his face. They looked so cute together, so happy. It reminded him of a simpler time, but he forced himself to push those memories to the back of his head and remembered that he was hatching a plan to murder these two. He watched the two dragons as they ran specific errands. Then, as they returned to go to bed, he tuned in to their conversation, then went home when he didn't hear any sign of their plan coming together.

Oh well, it was time to move on with the plan.

Visit

Glory was running through the rainforest as fast as her legs would take her. She didn't know exactly why she was running, but she was running from... something. Or someone. All she knew was that if she stopped for just a second it would catch her. She screamed for help as she ran, unable to fly for some reason. She would jump into the air and flap her wings, but they would suddenly become very heavy, and she would crash down to earth again.

"Help!" she screamed desperately. "Jambu! Tsunami! Clay! Deathbringer! ANYONE?!"

But there was no one to answer her. She was alone, and only wasting her breath. She suddenly tripped over something and went tumbling down a hill. Hitting her hips and ribs on the dirt mounds. When she reached the bottom, she felt something large and cold against her. She recoiled and looked at the thing she rolled into.

It was Deathbringer's corpse. And a knife was in his throat. Glory cried out in terror. She had stopped. The creature chasing her revealed himself, though not fully. All she saw were his twisted smile and his awful, evil green eyes. Green was usually a signal for good, for life, but his entailed death and mutilation. They bore into her soul, into her mind, corrupting it, breaking it.

"Thanks for the delivery."

Glory woke up in a cold sweat, and her Nightwing bodyguard was beside her in an instant, glass of water already in hand. Glory writhed and screamed, a million tiny fingers clawing at her scales. "Calm down," Deathbringer urged. He put the glass of water to the side and grabbed Glory's talons to prevent her from hurting herself, but took a bit of damage in the process. "Glory! Glory! It's me..."-Glory finally began to calm down, and took deep breathes-"It's me... Take 3 deep breathes... Good, now 3 more... And 3 more... Good, good. You're ok."

Glory coughed, and Deathbringer gave her the water, which she gladly accepted, allowing the cool liquid to soothe her dry throat.

"Thank you," Glory says, breathing heavily. Deathbringer nods and disappears in the bathroom for a moment, before coming out with a cold towel. Deathbringer dabbed Glory's forehead before she took it from him and laid it on top of her head.

"Wanna talk about it?" Deathbringer asked.

"There's nothing to talk about," Glory snaps, still a bit shook. "How did you know how to do that?"

Deathbringer scoffed. "I've had my fair share of Nightmares, and I... taught it to myself."

Now that her heart had slowed down enough, Glory was starting to feel her fatigue again. "What time is it?"

"Almost Sunrise," Deathbringer responded, causing Glory to grunt and stuff herself into her hammock. "Remember, you're friends are coming today."

Glory launched up again and looked at him. She had totally forgotten about the plans she had made with her friends. Glory groaned and stood up, deciding that it was time to get ready for the day. "Take a bath and get dressed up, I don't want you smelling like a pig when my friends come along. And use soap this time!"

"Fine! Fine!" Deathbringer digressed and went to go take a bath. Glory also took a bath in a separate room, then spent a few minutes changing her scale colors to the best combination, though she didn't find it. *I'll figure it out later,* Glory thought and came out of the bathroom with turquoise base colors with hints of dark blue and indigo on her joints and a gold streak down her spine.

When she came out, she caught Deathbringer looking in the mirror scraping his horns with a knife. "Are you sharpening your horns?" Glory questioned with a snicker.

"Ssshhhh!" he said harshly, before saying in almost a whisper. "It's a very meticulous process."

Glory chuckled. "My moons, Deathbringer. What am I going to do with you?"

"I have a few suggestions," Deathbringer said smugly, and Glory exclaimed in disgust and stormed out. "Oh come on. I'm sorry, I was joking! Glory!"

Little bits of red and green and a hint of pink appeared on Glory's scales. She stormed out of the palace with a little difficulty. Even after a few years, the palace was just so massive it was hard to navigate sometimes; though the size was necessary since it not only had to be a living space fit for a queen, many of the committees the queen actively supervised (such as the seers, the postal services, etc) also met in the west wing. However, Glory was still allowed to be mad at it. It was only early sunrise, and streaks of purple and gold lit up the night sky. Glory found herself lingering at the doorway, looking at the beautiful picture. *That's it*, she thought. Glory shifted her turquoise to a dark-ish velvet blue, then added little white spots so it looks somewhat like the night sky, from there, she cast a gold hue then added light rays of purple, orange, and pink. Glory looked again at the sunrise, just taking in how beautiful it looked.

"Almost as beautiful as you," Deathbringer said, coming up next to her with a smirk. Glory rolled her eyes and punched him in the gut, before flying off to the crystal pond. The Crystal Pond is a small place in the forest with water that was so clear you could see the beautiful rocks at the bottom and the fish swimming around. There is a rumor that it was animus-touched, and had the magic ability to heal any injury. But it had never been proven. So for now, it was just a beautiful spot for dragons to meet in.

Glory saw 3 shapes in the distance. *Wow, they're early,* Glory thought. Then, something strange happened. It's difficult to describe the feeling that washed over Glory in that instant. It was as if every dragon in Pyrrhia suddenly looked at Glory at once... a million eyes all over her; her scales washed green and her heart skipped a beat, but it was over as suddenly as it began.

"Glory?" Deathbringer said urgently. He rushed to her side with comedic speed. "Are you ok?"

"I'm alright," Glory lied. She wasn't alright, she didn't even know what happened. "Just had a bit of Deja-"

"Glory!" Sunny screamed as she nearly tackled Glory in a tight hug. "By all the moons I missed you!"

Glory laughed and hugged her friend back as Fatespeaker helped Starflight land. "My goodness, Sunny! Look how big you are!" Glory exclaimed. Sunny was no longer had the little sister look that she'd always had, she was almost as big as Glory.

"I have so much to tell you!" Sunny practically yelled. However long it had been, Sunny still hadn't lost her hyperactive energy.

"Yeah, don't mind the blind guy over here," Starflight said with a smile, and Glory ran over and hugged him and Fatespeaker.

"It's good to see you, too, Starflight," Glory said. "And Fatespeaker, good to see you're taking good care of my brother for me."

"I try," Fatespeaker joked.

"Wait, wait," Glory said pulling away. "Where's the rest of us?"

"Clay and Peril are back at JMA, they are taking care of-" Starflight's eyes flashed behind Glory for a moment. "the students."

Glory turned around and saw Sunny sitting innocently, and raised an eye ridge. "Anyway!" Fatesepaker said. "As Sunny said, we have a lot to tell you, but first, you need to tell us!"

"Yes!" Sunny agreed. "Don't leave anything out!"

Catching Up... Is That Thunder?

Glory told them everything, starting from her piercing her Kingdom back together after Darkstalker ran amuck, about setting up The Constitution Of New Beginnings (basically a Pyrrhia Constitution) with the other queens, about Queen Ruby setting up Healing Centers for those mentally affected by the war, brushing past that time Deathbringer ended up getting drunk at a party, told them about how Jambu revealed he had a daughter, and ended on the rumor about the fox in the forest.

"You've really been busy, huh?" Fatespeaker admired.

"It's really hard work, but the Kingdom seems to be doing well," Glory said, his throat slightly dry from talking so much.

"I thought sorting the books in the library was tedious," Starflight said in disbelief. "Going through all of the formal complaints must be miserable.

"I'm just glad you haven't worked yourself to death," Sunny joked, earning a slight chuckle from everyone.

"Well, how about you guys?!" Glory exclaimed. "How is JMA! How are the students, how are the teachers?"

"Well, the school has really grown!" Sunny answered excitedly. "We had tons of new teachers now and they're all really passionate about what they do."

"Give it a month," Fatespeaker quipped, and Sunny laughed and punched her playfully in the shoulder.

"The newest student application is one we didn't expect," Starflight said. "Do you remember Peacemaker?"

"Peacemaker is applying?" Glory asked, and Fatespeaker responded with a quick nod.

"He applied for a major in History," Fatespeaker confirmed. "And we also have optional classes that we call electives that students can take based on their interests. We have a cooking class, a gardening club, a theater class, an art club, a creative writing club, and a leadership club."

"What's a leadership club?" Deathbringer interjected, which was somewhat surprising. Deathbringer had stayed quiet for most of the meeting, but Glory was glad he was finally joining the group.

"It's essentially a student committee," Starflight answered. "They plan student-led events, like school dances-"

"And a rap battle!" Fatespeaker interjected loudly. "There was a rap battle once! Remember that Sunny?"

"I didn't know Qibli had such bars!" Sunny said, and Deathbringer chuckled at how the word sounded coming out of the Sandwing's mouth. The 3 were silent for a moment and shared a look.

"I don't think I like that look," Glory stated nervously.

"Should we tell her now?" Fatespeaker asked the two dragons.

"I mean, it's as good a time as ever," Sunny said. "Clay *did* say to mention it."

"Well now I'm *really* scared," Glory joked.

"So, as you already know Clay and Peril got married," Starflight started slowly, and Glory gasped.

"Did they break up?" Glory demanded anxiously and all three dragons looked shocked and shook their heads vigorously.

"No no no!" Sunny assured her, and Glory sighed in relief. "It's actually pretty much the opposite, actually."

"Peril laid an egg that's due to hatch in just a few months!"

Fatespeaker blurted, unable to handle the building tension any longer. Glory gasped and was stunned into silence. The queen coughed a few times before responding.

"WHAT?!" Glory screamed so loud that a couple of birds in the area took off in surprise. "Why didn't you tell me this sooner?!"

"We thought that you would want to hear it in person!" Sunny defended. "Saying something like that over a letter is a bit impersonal don't you think?"

Glory huffed in annoyance before she knew the Sandwing was right. Why did Sunny always have to be so reasonable?

"And... another thing," Starflight said slowly once again. "I and Fatespeaker got engaged 4 months ago."

Glory gasped again, and Deathbringer rolled his eyes. "Just now, huh?" he remarked, earning a hard glare and a tail whack from Glory.

"I'm so happy for you!" Glory said sincerely. "Just ignore the lump of coal behind me."

"That's sexy lump of coal to you 'mam," Deathbringer said with a weird accent.

"Speaking of..." Sunny started, but GLory put a claw up to silence her.

"Don't even think about it," Glory ordered, and Sunny laughed.

"You and Deathbringer still playing your little game?" Fatespeaker questioned. "Why haven't you two just gotten together already?"

"Yeah Glooooooooory," Deathbringer teased then burst out laughing, earning himself a hiss and *very nearly* a few scratches across the snout. Luckily, Sunny seemed to sense that Deathbringer was going to be DESTROYED, so they moved swiftly on. Sharing more tales of funny stories, like the time the whole Jade Winglet was freaking out when they thought Turtle had disappeared, only to find he had been sleeping in the underground lake. Good times.

"Oh my goodness I almost forgot!" Sunny exclaimed suddenly. "So, you remember the student Flame? Yes... that Flame. Well, after the incident he has admitted to Queen Ruby's healing centers! And he's doing so much better now! He even came back to formally apologize to the staff, the students, and Stonemover; and he's dating Umber. Oh! And, with his help, Stonemover is now mobile! It took some convincing but now Stonemover is *also* admitted to the healing center. And now-"

"Hold up," Glory interjected. "So... Flame is *nice* now?!"

"Yes, believe it or not," Sunny said insistently. "And he's dating Umber. Those two make such a cute couple!"

Glory tilted her eye ridge skeptically, but it was cut short by heavy rainfall. And I do mean *heavy*. "What in Pyrrhia?" Glory wondered. It was clear skies not 10 seconds ago. Why was it pouring now?

"I guess we should start heading back," Sunny said, yelling to be heard over the heavy rain.

"Not in this weather," Glory yelled back. "You guys can stay in the palace! We have plenty of spare rooms!"

Sunny hesitated, but the heavy rain was a natural motivator. Soon they were all flying back towards the palace, keeping their heads down to avoid getting rain in their eye. The sun had been completely blocked out, making it darker than a night with no moons. When Glory finally snuck a glance up, her mouth hung open. The clouds were dark black, ominous, and seemed to stretch far beyond the Rainwing village. Bright red lightning flashed through the air and struck the ground, lighting a small fire that was quickly put out by the heavy rain.

"Glory!" Deathbringer yelled to get the Rainwing's attention. She hadn't realized she had stopped and was now hovering in the air. "Come on!"

Glory began to follow him before a worrying thought popped into her mind. *The search party,* she realized. *They're still out there. Will they come back when they saw the rain? It was protocol, wasn't it?* The

Queen didn't want to take any second chances.

"The search party!" Glory informed Deathbringer. "I have to find them!"

Deathbringer looked conflicted for a moment before responding. "I'll come with you!" Deathbringer assured her. "Just come into the palace for a moment!"

Why? Glory thought, but brushed it aside when she shivered head to tail. She would get some supplies and then go right to the search. At least, that's what she *would've* done, if the moment she went into her room Deathbringer hadn't locked her in and sent guards to make sure she didn't leave.

That damn Nightwing!

Lightning Is Mean

Deathbringer hated storms, not only were they extremely dangerous, but they were wet, cold, dangerous, and hard to navigate in... Did I mention dangerous? The rain kept beating down onto Deathbringer as if he had personally insulted it. Also, I should probably mention that this storm was feeling very zappy on this specific day. Lightning was becoming increasingly frequent and was beginning to feel too close for comfort. Did I mention that it was dangerous?

But if it meant keeping Glory safe... Well, that's all that matters.

"Look at you," he scoffed at himself. "Sounding like a romantic."

It came to Deathbringer quickly (though still not as soon as he'd have liked) that he had no idea where the search party was, or what they were searching for. *Where had they even started?* Deathbringer wondered, and hopelessness quickly filled him. Maybe his heroic adventure wasn't going to be so heroic after all.

That's when he heard a dragonet scream.

Deathbringer froze in the air and scanned his surroundings, searching for the source of the noise. His eyes finally caught two little flashes of green and he barreled towards it. It was a little girl, no more than a year old. The girl seemed to be a hybrid, a mixture of Nightwing, and Rainwing. Certain scales down her sides and on her joints were bright green but the rest of her stayed black. The dragonet was looking up at something, though Deathbringer couldn't see what due to the rain.

"Hey!" He yelled to be heard over the pounding rain and claps of thunder. The little girl remained motionless, her eyes unfocused, so he went over to her and placed a talon on her shoulder, causing her to jump but not look away.

"I work with the queen," he says. "We need to get you home."

The dragonet raises her arm to point a tree about a meter away, not taking her eyes off of it. Deathbringer looked but the night was too dark to see anything. Until the lightning flashed once more, and he saw what the girl had been looking at. There was a Rainwing tied against the tree by thin metal ropes, blood spilling from the many many MANY MANY cuts all over his body. So much so that it made Deathbringer wonder if the dark puddles around them were really water. They were deep gashes in every place except for the ones where stabbing him there would be lethal, which means whoever murdered this dragon was trying to make his death as long and painful as possible. It made Deathbringer sick to his stomach, and he turned the dragonet's head away from the sight.

How long had this girl been staring? Minutes? Hours? Did she watch the dragon die? A million questions came to his mind but he didn't get any answers.

"Everything ok over there?" a loud booming voice had no problem cutting through the sound of the rain. Deathbringer knew that voice, and the dragon connected to it revealed himself seconds later, along with 3 other companions.

"Whisper," Deathbringer sighed in relief, glad to have his friend near him. Whisper had been one of those names that suited him at hatching but he eventually grew out of. As a hatchling, Whisper was skinny and weak and could barely muster a squeak here-and-there, but as he got older, though his body was still relatively small, his voice was that of a god. They had met during a party Queen Glory had hosted, and had been good friends ever since.

Whisper was accompanied by another and two Rainwings, all of which were bigger than him but seemed to follow his lead. "Deathbringer!" Whisper said with a warm smile, but then his eyes caught the dragon on the tree and his smile disappeared. "Oh my..."

"You guys need to get back to the evacuation center!" Deathbringer warned them.

"There's another search party!" Whisper informed him. "We can't leave them out here!"

Deathbringer groaned, *of course, there's a complication.* "I'll get them! You guys get this girl to the evac center."

Whisper looked at Deathbringer worriedly before ordering the rest of the group. "Bring this girl to the evacuation center," Whisper ordered. "I'll join you in a minute."

The rest of the group nodded and took the girl from Deathbringer, saying soothing things, though it seemed to not affect her; the girl stared straight forward blankly, probably in shock.

"I can't leave you out here to fend for yourself," Whisper said matter-of-factly.

"You can't stay out here," Deathbringer warned him. "It's too dangerous."

"That wasn't a request," Whisper informed him, and Deathbringer smiled despite himself. "I bumped into them a few minutes before it all went down. Hopefully, they're still in the area."

Deathbringer nodded in acknowledgment, and Whisper launched into the air, leading Deathbringer to the spot he spoke of.

Then, madness erupted.

The lightning, which had grown more and more frequent in the last few minutes, exploded. Millions of bolts of lightning fired off at once, forming a net-like shape in the sky and striking the ground rapidly. Soon, the center of the net began to cave in, creating a portal to a black abyss the size of the Skywing Palace. Deathbringer stared in awe, his minding jumping through hoops to figure out how this was possible, but he knew the answer; it wasn't. From the center of the hole, shot a flash of white that slammed into the forest somewhere before it started to close up. *Well that was anticlimactic,* Deathbringer thought, but once it had mostly closed, open only about the radius of a dragon stretched head to tail, a flaming black substance shot out last minute.

This one landed directly onto Deathbringer. The fireball was impossibly cold and quickly wrapped around him like the world's

worst blanket.

"Deathbringer!" Whisper exclaimed as he saw his friend being enveloped by this black substance. The Nightwing yelled in pain as whatever latched onto him ate away at his scales, seemingly burning them off.

Then, he was struck by lightning and it all went away.

The sounds of the world washed away like a wave crashing onto the beach, and the burning and fatigue and even that annoying itch fell away; it left Deathbringer in a state of pure bliss as he barreled down towards the earth. Maybe Whisper was yelling his name, maybe Deathbringer had already died; he didn't know, and he thought that maybe he didn't need to know.

It's funny, really. Deathbringer might've died there, and he would've been content with it; but as they say, strike me once, I die peacefully, strike me twice, I'm going out swinging...

He was struck a second time.

All of the peaceful bliss that had existed moments prior vanished in an instant and he was thrown back into his burning, tired, dying body. His ears rang painfully, and he saw Whisper diving towards him. For a moment, Deathbringer had forgotten that he was about to die. Inevitably, he reached the ground and his entire body erupted with pain. He would've screamed if there was an ounce of moisture left in his body. Instead, he just convulsed on the ground like an epileptic.

And because there was nothing else he could do, he laid there, losing blood, and uttering one last word before he fainted. "Glory," he croaked, he wanted to be with her. He wanted to hug her close and wait for this freak storm out.

"You're going to be ok!" Whisper promised him, but his promise was blatantly empty. "Just try to stay calm... Uhm... err... We'll get some help!"

Was this how he died? Struck by lightning? He managed to chuckle,

of all things. It wasn't the death he or his mother expected. They always guessed he would die because he did something stupid on a mission. He never thought he would die in a storm, having saved a child, and on his way to save more dragons. Would Deathbringer, the dragon born to be irredeemable, die a hero, of all things?

All of these thoughts ran through his head in just a few seconds before the dark blanket of death wrapped around and began to take him away.

Then there was a voice, deep, dark, and confused.
"**You…are…Compatible?**"

The Aftermath

Glory paced impatiently, casting condescending glares at the guards post by her door every few seconds. *How long has it been? Minutes? Hours? It feels like hours.* According to the information Glory had recieved, the search parties had all returned by now; so where was Deathbringer? Had something happened to him? Was the storm even still going on? Her windows were covered up, layered with tightly woven strips of wood, a rainwing specialty that exhibited the strength of steel while remaining flexible.

A somewhat burly rainwing stumbled into the room wearing a look of incredible relief. "The storm is gone," he declared. One of the guards in the room clutched their chest, whispering a few prayers of thanks. "The numbers are still coming in, but so far we have 26 deaths and over 140 injured."

The Queen's sigh of relief suddenly turned around, choking her in a gasp. Although it had felt like hours, the couldn't have been going on for more than 30 minutes. So much damage caused in such little time was unprecedented! Could this be the work of animus magic? No, Anemone was the only one with weather-effecting enchantments, and she had no reason to perform such a heinous act of terrorism!

Figure it out later, she decided, finally, pushing past the guards and running towards the main hall. Glory had been against the idea of a palace in the first place, not wanting to rely on old traditions while she was trying to build a new world. She had eventually relented, allowing them to build one with only two things in mind: she needs a space to conduct various business, and there needed to be a place that could serve as a shelter in case of an emergency. As a result, the main hall was utterly massive, with multiple levels to accommodate all the dragons of the kingdom. Usually, it was so empty that Glory constantly contemplated having it removed, using the materials for something more useful; by the moons, was she

glad she hadn't.

It was packed wall to wall with dragons and the noise utterly unbearable. Children crying, parents asking if anyone had seen their dragonet, doctors rushing to help the wounded. The scent of blood and sweat hung heavily in the air, so clogging that the rainwing found herself panting. Dragging herself up to the throne, the Queen search behind the seat for a moment before finding a string, and yanking it with all her might. Above the crowd, cymbals crashed, piercing through the noise. Another few yanks, and the room was quiet. The Queen cleared her throat.

"Everyone please remain calm," she told them, struggling to summon the air she needed to project. "The storm has subsided, but the crisis is not over. There are still dragons to be cared for, dragons to be found, and cleanup to do. Any of those who are able-bodied, assist in the effort to move the injured to hospitals. Others can help search for survivors..."

There. A lean nightwing was walking slowly through the crowd, eyes wide and unfocused, talons covered in blood... Glory knew him. That was Deathbringer's friend who sounded like a narrator, and one of the nightwings she'd sent on the search party! He may know where Deathbringer was! "Please get to it! There's no time to lose!" she wrapped up quickly, before sprinting down to the dazed nightwing. "Whisper!" Glory cried, but he didn't even look up, didn't even flinch... now that she was thinking about it... "Whisper... whose blood is that?"

At first, he stayed silent, looking up at Glory with those hollow eyes. "There was nothing I could do for him..." he replied distantly.

"Who are you talkng about?" she questioned, growing increasingly worried. Was he alright? Was he talking about the other members of the search-

"Deathbringer..."

He's not coming back. The rainwing's heart dropped, her eyes widening as she grabbed Whisper by the shoulder. "What happened?!" she questioned frantically. "Is he ok?!"

"He was struck by lightning," It was one of the only times Glory had seen him live up to his name, speaking so quietly and timidly that Glory had to strain her ears to listen. "He's in the hospital."

Glory ran past the Nightwing and towards the front entrance when a guard stepped into her way.

"It's too-" the guard tried to warn her, but Glory bared her teeth and growled.

"Move," she commanded. "I won't ask again."

Because the guard wanted to keep both of his eyes, he moved out of the way and allowed the queen to pass. Outside, the storm had taken its toll on the Kingdom. Many houses had caved in or were knocked off of the trees they were resting on. The sun time platforms took heavy damage, and trees were flipped onto their sides and resting on top of houses. The carnage was unfathomable.

I can fix that, Glory told herself to stay focused. *Deathbringer is irreplaceable.*

~~~~~~

Deathbringer could hear voices, but he couldn't see them. He could hear the doctors talking about him, discussing possible solutions, asking about his injuries, and even saying that he was done for. He wanted to yell at them for even suggesting that the sexy beast that was Deathbringer could die. He tried to call out but his vocal cords refused to make a sound. He desperately needed some water, or milk, or anything to soothe the rocky wasteland that was his throat.

He couldn't feel anything, either. He couldn't move his wings, or wiggle his toes, or feel himself breathe. He was in a black, blissful void that offered nothing and took nothing... Now that he thought about it, blissful wasn't the correct word, because there were still things he found annoying; the right word was boring, it was boring being in that void.

What was that tingling?
~~~~~~

It wasn't doing anything special, it was just there; so evenly distributed throughout his entire body that he barely even felt it... But he couldn't feel anything else, so how could he feel the tingling sensation?

And what about Whisper? Had the Nightwing made it out of the storm safely?

"Dea-------er? Deathy ca- --- -ear me?"

Glory? Deathbringer forgot about everything else and focused on her voice, wanting to open his eyes and look at her, to hold her close and tell her it was alright, that everything would be fine; and then he'd say something stupid and make her roll her eyes. #relationshipgoals

"Isn't there anything you can do?" Glory's voice again.

"I'm sorry, we have tried everything." Deathbringer guessed it was a doctor. "But so far, he's completely unresponsive to outside stimuli.

IM HERE! He wanted to scream. *I'm here! I'm alive! Please! I want to be with you!*

So why don't you? It was another voice, deep, dark, and somewhat sinister. Deathbringer was dropped into a new void. It was still an empty black void, however, in this one, Deathbringer had a body, but he didn't think it was his; this body was charred and broken and crumbling, though it moved just fine. This void also had a floor that felt as if it had a thin layer of water.

Hello Deathbringer, the voice spoke again, this time coming from all directions. **I couldn't help but notice your little pathetic train if thought. It seems like you could use some help.**

How is this-? Deathbringer wondered, but his thought was cut short.

Possible? the voice finished Deathbringer's sentence and chuckled. **It's one of the many abilities I've acquired over my lifespan, but we're not here to talk about me. You do want to see Glory again, don't you?**

Of course! Deathbringer yelled into the abyss.

Of course, you do! The voice said charismatically. **Glory is everything to you, she means the world to you, why wouldn't you want to see her again? But, to do so, I just need one thing from you.**

I'll do anything, Deathbringer pleaded into the darkness.

Don't worry, it's not too hard, The voice said slyly. All I need you to do is promise that you'll eat well.

Deathbringer thought for a moment, was that all? It didn't feel fair, moreover, it was too good to be true. Eat well? Wasn't that a little... vague?

Well, if you believe that this deal just isn't for you, I could always let you die. The voice warned. **And the last thing you'd have done to Glory is locking her in a room. Not the best way to end a relationship.**

That's a cheap blow, Deathbringer thought with an eye roll, but inside half of him was screaming to take the deal, while his instincts were popping off, sending out danger signals. Why was he even worried? It was just a figment of his imagination, right?

I assure you, Deathbringer, I am very real, the entity said in a defensive tone.

Alright, Deathbringer said smugly. *If you're real, then what are you?*

The voice was silent for a moment, as if deep in thought. **If you agree to this deal, then all will be revealed in time.**

That sounds like something someone not real would say, Deathbringer teased.

Whether I am real or fake is irrelevant at the moment, the voice was now serious, obviously tired of Deathbringer's tomfoolery. **There is really no reason for you to turn down this deal. I am about to save you from death and all I am asking in exchange is that you stay healthy.**

Alright, Deathbringer finally accepted. He didn't know what this thing was, or how it all worked, but it was promising him a second chance; why wouldn't he take it. *I promise to... eat well, whatever that means.*

Pleasure doing business with you.

The peaceful black void suddenly dropped away and Deathbringer was thrown into a land of fire, at least, that's how it felt. The light tingling that Deathbringer had felt earlier suddenly escalated into an intense burning sensation. His eyes shot open and he could see for the first time in hours, except it wasn't as pleasant as he'd thought it be. After living in darkness for hours, the sudden light scorched his eyes and he squinted them instantly.

Deathbringer's senses all came back one by one, none of them as pleasant as they should've been. His hearing came back shortly after his sight, more sensitive than ever; he heard everything; countless heartbeats assaulted his ears, joined by conversations and even talon-steps. When his sense of smell returned, all he smelt of burning flesh, which he soon realized was his own scales.

His sense of taste came next, filling his mouth with a bitter and salty taste. Then his sense of touch, which was the worst of them all. Every nerve in his body felt like it had been lit aflame, and why did his bones feel wet? But when the tears came to his eyes, not all of them were from pain; though, most of them were, some were still from his relief. He was alive! But why did it hurt so much?!

When he regained his ability to move, he gripped and clawed at the bedsheets in agony and yelled. He could speak! Though not coherently, all he could do was yell profanities in pain.

Multiple doctors came into the room and attempted to hold Deathbringer down, but that only made the pain explode. The Nightwing yelled and shook them off, kicking one against the wall and throwing the other down with his wing.

"Glory," he managed to croak, and attempted to get out of the bed, but fell to the floor.

"Deathbringer!" Glory yelled in surprise and relief, and it was at that moment that the pain finally became somewhat bearable. Glory ran to Deathbringer's side and helped him back onto the bed, but everywhere she touched caused the pain to intensified in that spot, and he yelled in pain.

"I'm sorry," she said quickly, pulling her talons away. "You have 3rd and 4th degree burns all over your body."

The doctors stood up, one of which gave Deathbringer a nasty look, but they both came to Deathbringer's side. Now that Deathbringer's eyes had adjusted he could finally see that he was in a green room with a cart to his left with different needles and bottles on the top, large bottles on the bottom, and different tubes and masks on the side. Glory sat next to Deathbringer and hung her head, "I can't believe you're ok!" Glory said shakily, and the Nightwing found a tear on her cheek; he brushed it off of her face with a smile.

"Is that for me?" Deathbringer tried his best to sound smug, but it just came out as a hoarse grumble.

"Of course it is!" She yelled angrily. "10 minutes ago they said you wouldn't make it. Now you're already causing trouble and giving me that stupid smirk!"

Deathbringer began to chuckle but stopped himself after he found it caused him immense pain. Really, everything he did hurt, even if just a little. Even his scales rubbing against one another as he moved caused pain. And his voice was terrible, dry like sand but deep like Whisper's...

"Whisper!" Deathbringer suddenly remembered. "The storm!"

"Gone," Glory said, then saw the horrid expression on Deathbringer's face and corrected herself. "The storm! Not Whisper. He's really shaken, but fine."

Deathbringer sighed in relief. He rubbed his throat, again noticing how dry it was. "Can I get some water?"

"I've got it," one of the doctors said and left the room to get it. The

other doctor was hooking up a tube to one of the large bottles, presumably containing some kind of gas. Deathbringer tried to read the small text on the side of the bottle but was unable to. Glory noticed Deathbringer's concern and looked over as well.

"What is that?" she asked, the doctor turned to her and smiled at her concern.

"Don't worry," he said genuinely. "It's just a sedative, it'll put him to sleep and ease the pain."

"I-I don't need a sedative," Deathbringer said, though he didn't know why he said it. His scales were still burning and he wanted to sleep, but something inside him was saying the opposite.

"Unfortunately, it's not really an option. Your heart is beating somewhat fast and hard, so we're going to put you to sleep as a precaution, here," the doctors handed him a mask with a tube connected to the bottle. "I want you to put this around your snout and breathe deeply."

Deathbringer obeyed and put it up to his snout, at the same time, the doctor turned a knob on the bottle, and the mask slowly filled with gas. After several seconds, Deathbringer's head began to feel foggy as the sedatives took over his brain, trying to slowly force him into sleep. A moment later, he startled awake again as a rainwing stumbled into the room, out of breath.

"Queen Glory!" The Rainwing exclaimed. "I've been looking for you! A dragoness has arrived, she claims to be responsible for the storm!"

The Stranger

The dragons who had come to the palace to seek shelter had mostly cleared out, either going to the center to find their families or to the hospital to get their wounds treated. Glory delivered a statement in the palace to announce that she was going to work hard to fix everything, and answered some questions before heading out to meet the strange visitor. The meeting was going to be held in the courthouse since if this dragon truly was responsible for the storm, they were technically a terrorist, or, more optimistically, she would only be charged with almost a hundred counts of dragon slaughter.

After several minutes, the defendant arrived, accompanied by 2 guards. The dragon was a hybrid of sorts; they seemed to be primarily icewing with mostly white scales, but also some of the orange scales on her joints and the wide wings of a Skywing. The dragon stood tall and proud, her elongated kneck allowing Glory to see that the dragon had small text tattooed into the side of her neck. *L-01*.

"So," the dragon said impatiently. "Are we going to begin, or you just gonna sit there changing colors?"

"How did you start the storm?" Glory questioned. *Who does this dragon think she is?*

"I didn't *actually* start it, it was really... What did he want me to call him? Dangit I always forget these things...."

Glory couldn't help the bits of red appearing on her scales. "Don't play games with me."

"Hold on," the hybrid said with a frustrated look on her face. "Omniverse! Yes! Sorry about that, Omniverse is the one who started the storm. And he told me to come here and talk to you."

"About what exactly?"

"Ragnorak," the hybrid said seriously. "The end of life in this dimension as you know it."

Glory couldn't stop her own confusion appearing on her scales. Was this some kind of joke? Some kind of prank?

"I know how it sounds," the hybrid admitted. "But this is serious. I know it sounds farfetched, but I'm an elite warrior, and I know of some very dangerous individuals will stop at nothing until they've destroyed all life in this dimension."

"And you are?"

"You can call me Rogue," the visitor said slyly as if she was so proud of her name. The other guards seemed to share the queen's confusion, the Rainwing's scales slowly turning orange-purple.

"Ok, *Rogue*," Glory spoke after a moment of silence. "You say that your friend caused the storm, correct?"

"Yes, but not on purpose," Rogue admitted.

"Are you aware that this storm killed many dragons and injured more?"

"Yes, but again, it was out of our control," the hybrid said, clearly annoyed with the queen's insistent questioning.

"You have still not told me *how* the storm was caused."

"There was a fault in our... methods," Rogue spoke carefully. "We thought that it wouldn't be a huge issue but it was."

"That's vague," Glory observed.

"It has to be," Rogue informed her ominously. "Or bad things could happen."

"Is that a threat?"

"NO!" Rogue yelled exasperatedly, then stopped and took a deep breath. The hybrid then began muttering something in a language

unlike anything in the history books. "Nikolo Vacana Nane Chisbaska!"

"Ok," Glory said, done with Rogue's games. "Allow me to get this straightened out. Your friend, by methods you cannot disclose, caused a storm that killed nearly a hundred dragons and injured even more, and you are an accomplice. Am I correct so far?"

"Mostly."

"I do not believe you," Glory said. "No dragon can cause a storm, especially not one that big, unless they are an animus. And if I were to find out that you possess an unregistered animus and are using them to cause chaos within tribes, both you and they will be arrested."

Rogue glared at Glory, and Glory glared back. Rogue suddenly broke eye contact and took multiple deep breaths, muttering something to herself in the same foreign language as before. "Look," Rogue said in a voice similar to the one Glory used whenever she was trying not to yell. "You're in danger, everyone is. My team and I can help you."

"This Omniverse, he's your leader?"

"No," Rogue said, still quiet. "Our leader is Omnipotence, but he's out dealing with queens that aren't being difficult."

"It would be wise if you watched your tone."

"You know what?!" Rogue said, her calm quickly turning into intense hostility. "No, it wouldn't. I tried being nice but that didn't get the information through your thick skull! So let me try again. My name is Rogue, I'm a badass, and if you don't shut up and listen to what I have been told to say I'm going to lose it! *Niet viey tada mogu migi eto isa visavada!*"

Rogue panted lightly, and Glory watched her. *She's just like Tsunami,* Glory realized, making her dislike this stranger even more.

"You know what? Screw it! He can deal with this," Rogue turned to

leave, but one of the guards stood in her way. Before he was even all the way in front of her, Rogue swept his talons from under him and bumped him away. The other guards tried to intervene, but Glory stopped them.

"Let her go," she commanded as Rogue continued to leave at her own, leisurely pace. "I want to meet this leader she speaks of."

~~~~~~

After the courtroom incident, Glory returned to the hospital, only to find that Deathbringer was sound asleep, being overlooked by a young Rainwing. As soon as Glory stepped in, the girl's eyes widened. "Moons above!" the Rainwing exclaimed. "You're Queen Glory! Um... H-hi! My name is Paradise, and I was put in charge of monitoring Deathbringer's vitals while he's under anesthetics."

"Hello," Glory said regally. She couldn't help but smile at how flustered the dragonet got when she entered the room.

"My mentor went to the bathroom but he'll be back any minute now," Paradise said with a nervous chuckle, then retreated into a corner silently. They stood in silence for a moment before she spoke again. "So what happened to him?"

"I'm told he was struck by lightning," Glory said, and the nurse looked at her in awe.

"That's... Not possible."

"What do you mean?" Glory looked up at the young rainwing, who was looking at the queen with wide eyes. Paradise looked down for a moment as if deciding which cake she wanted, before looking back up at Glory to speak.

"Dragons struck by lightning... they don't make it," Paradise explained. "Look, I paid attention in biology --how else would I be here?--, and dragons can take approximately 1000 ohms of electricity before entering cardiac arrest. Of course, we can't confirm this exact number because we can't exactly shock dragons until they die... for obvious reasons, but it has held for all the cases
~~~~~~

we've encountered."

"But that doesn't automatically mean that Deathbringer is going to die, right?" Glory questioned worriedly. After all that had happened, she didn't want him to die on her now. "There must be exceptions to this, right?"

"Well, yes, there are some," Paradise admitted. "Some dragons who are shocked just above that thresh hold do sometimes survive at the most another 19 years... But the point is, Deathbringer wasn't *just above the thresh hold.* My Queen, a single lightning bolt carries well over a billion volts."

Glory looked at Deathbringer, who was sleeping peacefully. Deathbringer had always had a knack for surviving things he wasn't supposed to, but this? He should be dead 1,000,000 times over... *But he's not,* the emotional side of Glory told her. *Why won't everyone see that's important?*

A groan cut off Glory's thoughts as Deathbringer groggily opened his eyes. Paradise looked around frantically, obviously unsure what to do. "Uhm... Go back to sleep, Deathbringer, it's... ok?"

"Very convincing," Deathbringer said tiredly, causing Paradise to give an exasperated sigh.

"I don't know!" she whispered. "You're supposed to be asleep for another eight hours! Where is he?!"

"Hey Glory," Deathbringer said, taking her talon into his. "How's it going?"

"Absolutely atrocious," the queen admitted. "And personally, I think it's all your fault."

"Me?" Deathbringer said jokingly, but so quiet you could barely hear a thing. "You're the one who sent the search party!"

"You're the one who had to be all heroic," Glory argued, and Paradise shushed her.

"Deathbringer," Paradise said, "how are you feeling?"

"On the brink of death," Deathbringer said jokingly, then responded seriously when he saw Paradise's look. "I'm fine, tired, though."

"You should be a tad more than tired," Paradise remarked. "Try to go back to sleep, let your body heal."

"So Glory," Deathbringer said, completely ignoring Paradise. "How's it been running Kingdom without me?"

"Excuse me, it's not like you helped in any way," Glory remarked, and Paradise sighed in exasperation.

"Where is he?!" the young rainwing cursed under her breathe, obviously panicking without her mentor there to guide her.

"This really doesn't bode well for my career," Deathbringer commented. "How am I supposed to protect you while I'm in here?"

Glory knew that she didn't need his protection but part of her liked having him there, and didn't think that she could sleep without him nearby; even if she found it unsettling how he rarely slept.

"Would it be possible to have Deathbringer moved into my room?" Glory asked, causing Paradise to shrug her shoulders.

"You're asking the wrong dragon," Paradise said with a sigh, then her ear flicked up. "Speaking of..."

A Nightwing came into the room with a tired look on his face, his eyes half-closed before shooting open at the sight of the queen.

"You have the worst timing I've ever seen in a dragon!" Paradise snarled, punching the dragon softly in the shoulder; the other dragon didn't react, just stared wide-eyed at the queen.

"I was just asking your apprentice here if it would be possible to move Deathbringer's bed into my quarters?"

"She can't sleep unless she knows I'm close by, protecting her," Deathbringer explained with a smirk. The nightwing still said nothing, simply staring at the queen in the room he was assigned.

"Y-you should talk to the doctor," the Nightwing finally answered, looking at Paradise as if expecting answers but only received a shrug. "Umm, can I get you something?"

"No, I'm fine," Glory denied, politely. At this point, she was used to dragons being flabbergasted by her presence. "I was just here to check up on Deathbringer."

"Who is awake, by the way!" Paradise said, shooting her mentor an accusing look. The Nightwing thought for a moment.

"He'll probably be out in a few minutes," he explained. "This can happen sometimes, just let him get his rest naturally. But while you're awake, is there anything we can do to make you comfortable?"

"Water?" Deathbringer requested, and the Nightwing nodded.

"Alright, Paradise, go get him some water, please."

Paradise rolled her eyes at him but left the room, and came back shortly with some water, which Deathbringer accepted greedily. "You know," Deathbringer said after a moment. "I'm gonna go out on a limb here, and say I don't think I like being struck by lightning."

The Creature

Fire.

Fire everywhere I turned. But this was no nightmare. Everywhere I turned, the destruction of another world stood. Which, would soon become a reality, if the plan continued to go well. The pieces were in place, and everything was going exactly as planned.

Mortals.

Such... Futile creations. Why did Cawthon keep them around? They are so naive, fragile, and just weak overall. And the Nightmares are always called out for destroying, but when mortals do it it's fine? Pathetic. Luckily, they would all be dead in a matter of years. It was slow, but it was the only way to be sure. Especially now that THEY were here now.

But no time to worry now. It's time for lunch. My old one got so soggy in the downpour last night, and then some little dragonet discovered it, who led that filthy Nightwing to it. By the time I even got back to it, the guards were already there to take it away.

But I guess that's actually a good thing since now, I've placed a few new... Surveillance items on Deathbringer, and now have a new lunch. A few, actually, that, despite their name, were much less rained on than the other.

~~~~~~

Glory had spoken to the doctor, asking to have Deathbringer moved to her room, and they said that because he was doing so well they didn't see much of a problem with it. During the process, Whisper came to visit.

"My moons!" Whisper said when he saw the Nightwing and embraced him in a tight hug.
~~~~~~

"You're crushing me!" Deathbringer complained, but Whisper waited a moment before letting go.

"You stupid coal sniffer!" Whisper said quietly. "Don't scare me like that!"

"Yeah, *you* were the victim here," Deathbringer said but hugged his friend. "I'm ok, don't worry about me. I'm a survivor."

Whisper stayed with Deathbringer until they got to the royal chambers, in which case he left to get himself checked out since he *did* touch Deathbringer soon after he was struck, and might be suffering from minor electrocution or shock. By the time they made it in the room, it was late at night.

"Glory!" Sunny yelled, running up behind Glory. The rainwing had almost forgotten that her friends were here. "I heard what happened to Deathbringer, is he ok? Are you ok? What happened?"

"He's fine," Glory assured her. "The doctors say better than he should be."

Starflight and Fatespeaker (and I just want to make it known that just because Starspeaker is canon in this story DOES NOT mean I support it>:(!) followed close behind Sunny and asked Glory the same question, to which she gave the same answer.

"The doctors say he's fine enough to move into my room," Glory explained, and Sunny gave a covert wink to Fatespeaker. "How many times are you guys gonna do this?"

"Until we see little hybrids running up and down the palace halls!" Sunny said stubbornly, and Glory rolled her eyes.

"We should probably be heading back," Starflight said. "If this storm affected Jade Mountain too, we should be there to help out."

"But before we forget," Sunny interjected. "Have you heard from Tsunami?"

"No, why? She's not at Jade Mountain?"

"She went to visit Riptide about a week ago and never came back," Starflight explained. "According to them, she never arrived."

"Do you think she's ok?" Glory asked, concerned.

"You know Tsunami, I'm sure she'll turn up sooner or later," Fatespeaker said. So, they all said their farewells and left as Glory went to sleep. Deathbringer had been set up a few feet away from her bed and was already fast asleep. His scales were burnt up, charred, but somehow Glory could still imagine the old him. Not just before the storm, but the him that she met in the Ice Kingdom almost 8 years ago. She fell into a surprisingly peaceful slumber at the memory of his old, bold, dangerous eyes.

In the morning, Glory was awoken by a never-ending, single-noted beep. Glory tossed and turned at the sound before her eyes shot open and her head darted to Deathbringers bed, which was empty. The rainwing threw off her covers and flicked the light on, only to find that the nightwing was nowhere to be found.

"Deathbringer!" she called and opened the front door of her room. Outside, the storm had continued, red lightning cracked overhead. Glory called Deathbringer name again but received no response. A strange, scavenger creature big as a dragon stood in a clearing not too far from there. The creature had a glowing red crystal on his wrist, which he raised to the sky, causing the clouds to open up to a black hole. Then, with his malevolent green eyes, looked right at Glory and smiled before bringing his fist down to the ground, a lightning bolt crashing through the black hole and striking the ground. Glory was suddenly high in the sky, forced to watch as Pyrrhia was corrupted in one wave.

Glory woke in a cold sweat. It was early morning, and, despite it being a rainforest, there wasn't a cloud in sight. *Guess they're all used up,* Glory thought, remembering the storm last night. She would have to start some kind of relief program for those affected and make temporary housing for those who lost their until construction was back up and running.

Glory turned to find that Deathbringer was not in his bed, and before she could panic, he walked in through the door with a bag in

his talons. He looked at Glory and smirked. "Rise and shine, sleepy wings, you have work to do."

"You should be in bed," Glory told him, and he scoffed.

"Well good to see you, too," he said sarcastically. "It's fine, I'm feeling better today. In fact, so much better than I have the confidence to do this."

Deathbringer yanked all of Glory's blankets off of her at once, making her groan. "I liked you better charred."

Deathbringer laughed, and that's when Glory noticed that his scales... they were healed. Not completely but they had improved by days, maybe a week just overnight. "Where did you go, exactly?" Glory asked, wondering if he had gotten some outside help with his healing.

"That reminds me," Deathbringer said, placing the bag on Glory's bed. "I picked these for you."

"You know you shouldn't be on this job," Glory said, though she accepted the fruits, which happened to be mangos, one of Glory's favorite fruits. "With the condition you're in, I could justify having you off the job permanently."

"Aww, you care about me," Deathbringer teased.

"Nope, just don't want an incompetent bodyguard killing me and himself."

"I don't think you could get me off the job if you tried."

"I'm sorry, who's the acid-spitting Rainwing queen?"

"And who's the deadly assassin who lives up to their name?"

"And who is burnt to a crisp right now?"

Deathbringer thought for a moment, then smirked. "Touche."

Glory gave her own triumphant smirk and grabbed a few more

mangos before handing the bag back to Deathbringer. "I already ate," he informed her, pushing the bag back towards her.

"Where exactly did you go last night?" Glory asked again, and this time, she saw some kind of fear in his eyes, though it was only for a moment.

"I went to pick the fruit," he said, then smirked. "What? Did you miss me?"

"Well, I admit I was slightly worried that the dragon struck by lightning a day ago was running around causing trouble," Glory retorted.

"Well, my apologies for going to stretch my legs after being injured," Deathbringer said sarcastically. Somebody knocked on the door urgently. Glory invited them in, and a Nightwing came into the room.

"Queen Glory," he said, obviously stressed. "A member of the search party from last night just came in... They say they were attacked... I think you'll want to hear this."

"Deathbringer," Glory commanded. "You stay here."

"What?!" Deathbringer exclaimed, jumping to his talons. "I can't stay here! Danger is afoot!"

"You cannot fulfill the duties of being my bodyguard in your current condition!" Glory said, automatically switching to her *queen voice.*

"Then at least let me assign some guards to you," Deathbringer begged, and Glory agreed.

When Deathbringer said "some guards," Glory didn't know he meant every Rainwing and Nightwing in the rainforest. He assigned a total of almost 20 guards to her, most of which were invisible and pack killing darts. Deathbringer claimed that it was almost as much protection as he could provide.

Glory and Deathbringer said their goodbyes (and gave their smirks 😏) and left. Deathbringer heading back to the room, and Glory

attending her business. When Deathbringer was left alone, he did trivial things. He cleaned a bit, organized the cabinets, cleaned again, made the bed, slept, decorated with some flowers, cleaned again until he couldn't put it off anymore.

He needed to know what he did last night. He had gone to get fruit late last night after he had woken up and was unable to fall back asleep. He remembered being really hungry and then flying, but the rest was a blur. Had *he* attacked the search party? Killed them, even?

Deathbringer laid on the hammock, and closed his eyes, thinking back...

Deathbringer had been in the forest, collecting the fruits. He had collected a lot, but then he had suddenly found himself overcome by an intense yearning, a lust for something. He had been so surprised by how sudden and strong it was, he had doubled over in pain.

"You have not been eating well," a voice had told him. There had been a pounding -starting low but growing in volume slowly-, and he quickly realized that it was a heartbeat. He was all too familiar with the sound. A quick check had confirmed that it wasn't his own heartbeat. His own heart had been pounding in his chest and hadn't match the one he was hearing.

Deathbringer had felt the yearning become stronger, and began walking. He didn't quite know how he had known where he was going. Maybe it had been the heartbeat, cause it seemed to get louder with each step...

A burning sensation arose, and Deathbringer leaped into the air and began flying swiftly towards where his instincts were leading him. Unlike most times, he didn't even notice the landscape below him - he was too focused. Deathbringer convinced himself he was in control, but even he secretly knew that he had no say in what his next move was. That was all up to the creature that had promised him he could see Glory again.

Deathbringer didn't notice he was being followed(How could he? He had been too overcome by a hunger to notice the 3 dragons -2 hybrids and a Nightwing-, who were trailing him. But, we'll get to those guys later). It was only when one of the hybrids had yelled out to get the attention of the other 2, that Deathbringer noticed he was being tracked. He continued to fly straight, acting as if he had no idea but kept sneaking glances back at the trio in the sky. Soon, two of the three flew away, just leaving the Nightwing high above Deathbringer. When he was sure the others were too far away to notice, Deathbringer vaulted upwards, smashing into the Nightwing underbelly. He grabbed the mystery Nightwing's wing and tugged him so that Deathbringer was on top and he allowed them to fall.

By some strange magic, the mystery Nightwing somehow ended up behind Deathbringer, making the assassin hit the ground first. Deathbringer recovered quickly and threw the other Nightwing to the ground before sitting on top of him.

"Who are you?!" Deathbringer demanded. "And why were you following me?!"

The other Nightwing only looked at Deathbringer, with a scared looked on his face but a thoughtful one in his eyes, or eye, as the Nightwing only had a right eye; the other was replaced by an unnatural red scar. The look he gave the assassin was curious, as if Deathbringer was some strange species he had never seen. But he didn't respond. Deathbringer placed his claws on the Nightwing's throat.

"Do you hear me?" Deathbringer demanded again, this time, the strange Nightwing swallowed and then spoke.

"I am here to protect you," he said sagely, at least as much as he could with talons pressed to his throat.

"What makes you think I need protecting?"

"The creature making you do this right now." The Nightwing spoke so calmly and knowingly like he was possessed great knowledge about every word in the sentence he spoke. "I know many people who would kill for it, and a lot of people it will kill. I'm trying to

protect your family."

For just a moment, Deathbringer listened, losing the killer instinct he had just seconds ago. But it was only for one moment, as in the next, Deathbringer matched the heartbeat he heard with the one he felt on the dragon's neck. They matched, and the assassin had the inexplicable urge to end it --the pounding that was now deafening-- and started to tighten his grip.

The nightwing must have sensed this because he began to struggle. Deathbringer brought both talons down to grip the nightwings neck as he tried unsuccessfully to punch Deathbringer off of him. The nightwing made a questionable change in tactics, instead of pulling Deathbringer's head close to his.

"Sorry about this," the Nightwing muttered, before sending Deathbringer flying into a tree with a blast of red energy, making his burns explode with new pain and start bleeding again. In a flash, the Nightwing dashed into the trees, getting only a few feet before Deathbringer lunges down on him from above. Without looking back, nightwing seems to sense this, somehow, and dodges to the left, sending Deathbringer tumbling. He wasn't sure if the burning he felt was from his scars or the creature. The assassin stood up, coming face to face with the other nightwing only about 10 meters away.

"I don't want to fight you," the dragon said, no longer sounding noble, but scared. "But I will if I must."

But Deathbringer couldn't hear him very well, all he heard was the deafening pounding in his ears as the burning grew. **Kill him.** The voice in his head boomed, much louder and demonic but somehow seductive.

I'm not killing another dragon, he tried to tell either himself or the creature. *I'm different from how I was then.*

As soon as he thought that, the burning intensified as if he was being struck by lightning a 3rd time. The other Nightwing tried to take a step forward, saying something about helping, but Deathbringer roared making him take a step back.

A thick black liquid began to seep through Deathbringer's scales and started to wrap around his body. The other Nightwing's eyes widened as he began to suck in air, preparing a fireball. With an impossible burst of speed, Deathbringer prepared his own fire, which erupted out of his mouth as blue flames. The black mass had moved fast and almost finished wrapping Deathbringer's entire body inside of its grasp. He let out a crazed, animalistic roar as the black mass moved up his neck, then outward, then clamp down on Deathbringer's face. Cutting the roar short.

It was deadly silent.

Both Nightwings stood unmoving. Both breathed heavily. Until ***IT*** looked back up, Deathbringer's burnt face replaced by a hellish mass with.....

Something opened Deathbringer's eyes, pulling him from the flashback.

Stop, the voice commanded. It was the voice from his dream, the voice from last night.

"I need to know what happened that night," Deathbringer said out loud.

You didn't attack those Rainwings, the creature told Deathbringer as if that would make him give up completely.

"But I hurt someone, I can feel it. That's why you're keeping me from the truth," Deathbringer accused, and the creature didn't respond, letting him know that he had won the battle. *Now to win the war.* "You can't keep it from me forever!"

However, this was the wrong thing to say. Deathbringer's wing was twisted painfully behind his back, forcing him to the floor.

Are you stupid or are you dumb? the voice said sassily. **Maybe you didn't get the memo. Hi, I'm in control here.**

"Hi, in control, I'm Deathbringer," Deathbringer retorted. Again, the

wrong thing to say. The Nightwing felt something inside him shut off, and he lost control of his limbs. He fell to the floor, with no power to stop or slow his descent. He gasped, finding it difficult to breathe.

Do you feel that? the voice asked teasingly. **That, my friend, is the feeling of having your heart stopped. You are mine! You belong to me! You are powerless against me! You are nothing without me!**

"Says the person too socially awkward to show his face," Deathbringer croaked, and his heart resumed beating, but he stayed on the floor. A thick, black liquid seeped from Deathbringer's scales, onto the floor, then slid across the floor gradually; the way it moved faintly resembling a caterpillar. It was collected in front of Deathbringer, into the shape of a dragon. Deathbringer's eyes widened and he tried to yell, but only a small croak came out, leaving him breathless. The creature was only the shape of a dragon, but it was not solid. The black mass shifted and moved around, while still keeping the same shape. The creature laughed, somehow, even though Deathbringer guessed it didn't have anything solid in it, especially not vocal cords.

"What are you?" Deathbringer asked.

Part of the creature solidified and shifted, so that half was the mass, and half looked exactly like Deathbringer. Both sides smiled in unison. And he spoke, with a real voice, not in Deathbringer's head. But that wasn't comforting.

It uttered 3 words.

"WE ARE VENOM."

Briefing

The messenger brought Glory to the hospital, explaining that a rainwing guard had come in with scars from a blade-like weapon, claiming that his search party had been murdered by the fox-creature. Glory had met the rainwing, Guava, who seemed frantic. Glory authorized the police to perform an investigation and was then intercepted by another guard to inform her that a visitor who claimed to be an associate of Rogue was waiting for her.

He led Glory to a spot in the forest where a nightwing was waiting, but it was no normal nightwing. This nightwing not only had an eye missing, replaced by an unnatural red scar, but the lining of his wings was also the same red.

"He's been asking for you ever since he got here," the Rainwing guard informed her. "Refused to answer any questions until he spoke with the queen."

Glory sighed and stepped closer to the nightwing who looked at her with knowing, yet timid eyes.

"Hello," she greeted. "I am-"

"Queen Glory of the Rainwings. Dragonet of Destiny. Hatched on the 312th recorded brightest night. That was right, wasn't it? I didn't have much time to do my research, as our entry was somewhat rushed.

Glory was taken aback. How could this dragon know so much about her? Had he been stalking her? Watching her since the day she was hatched.

"I'm gonna get straight to the point," he said, obviously trying to sound authoritative. "My name is Omniverse. You've already met my... co-worker. The hybrid."

So, Glory thought. *You're here because she failed? Failed to convince*

me to hand over my kingdom, so you came with more empty threats.

"I am not going to hand over my kingdom to you," Glory said finally.

"I believe that she may have relayed our deeds in an unflattering manner," the nightwing explained politely, and Glory had to admit that she was already enjoying his company more than the other hybrid. "I apologize for the inconvenience, but you must understand that it is a stressful time for all of us, and she was simply acting impulsively."

"Just tell me what you need, and we'll make a deal," Glory offered, and the Nightwing nodded.

"While my associate explained it as *full control over your kingdom,* it would be more accurate to state that we require the ability to make executive decisions regarding your kingdom, should we have to evacuate, or if we ask you to hold back your military."

"Who's we?"

"I'm with a group of 2 other dragons, we go across the world protecting dragons from otherworldly creatures. And we recognize this kind of scenario. You are experiencing terrorization from a Class 9 Nightmare Entity, known as Twisted. I will not bore you with the details, but he is a powerful entity with an insatiable thirst for destruction. We believe that a member of the klyntaar race is also present."

"Could you elaborate on Klyntaar?"

"Of course, this Klyntaar is an incredibly complex and powerful creature. It first sends its strain out to weaken its opponents; which we were successfully able to extinguish before it got out of hand. Then, a few months or years later, the master arrives. It takes a host body, giving the host strange symptoms and abilities. Such as Insomnia, strange cravings, manic episodes, increased appetite, incredible healing factor, aggression, violent outbursts, etc. The symptoms become worse and worse as the creature slowly but violently takes control over the host's mind. Unless, of course..."

"Unless what?"

"It's not important, too unlikely. The point is, that this thing is very dangerous. I know that the storm hit the Rainwing village the hardest, so by logic, someone in the Rainwing village, or somewhere else in the world, is not who they say they are. Do you anyone who was affected in a... Strange way?"

Glory definitely knew someone like that. He was big, handsome, obnoxious and his name rhymes with... Heth... Tingler? But something told her that this dragon shouldn't know that. That, if she told this strange nightwing about Deathbringer, he wouldn't be there when she got home.

"No," she said. "But I can have my guards look into it."

Glory knew that the Nightwing knew she was lying. She could practically feel him inside of her head, searching through Glory's thoughts. She was so uncomfortable, she almost missed the long, ugly claw marks on his side.

"Where'd you get the scratch?" Glory says suddenly. The Nightwing looks at the scar and paused as if to think, then chuckled lightly.

"My co-worker is a bit moodier than you think," he says. "What you saw was her on restraints."

Glory should have believed him --she *had* met this co-worker he spoke of-- but he had a strange feeling to him. The way he spoke was a bit too knowledgeable and reminded her of Blister a bit too much. Deviously clever, like how the way he so was careful not to reveal his friend's name, and he waited until he spoke. As if he was planning every word carefully. But he also reminded Glory of Starflight and Clay. Then, she had a frightening thought.

If he really did know this much about her, stuff even she didn't, who's to say he doesn't know about her friends? And if he knows here friends, who is to say he doesn't know how to replicate their behavior? If he really is like Blister, he will not stop at control. Suddenly, Glory stopped herself. *Wow*, she thought. *I really am on edge*. She shrugged her own worries off and went back to addressing

the Nightwing.

"Are you the leader of your group?" Glory asked, and the Nightwing chuckled.

"Of course not, I probably couldn't lead anyone if I tried. To be honest, we've never really established a leader. It usually depends on the mission, and whoever knows more about it takes up that role. But it's usually my best friend, Omnipotent."

Glory noticed how the word labored out of his mouth as if he didn't usually say it, though, she didn't know why she noticed it.

"Could I speak to him?" Glory asked, shaking it off, but the Nightwing shook his head.

"He's trying to gain control of another tribe."

"Why do you need control of multiple tribes?"

The Nightwing looked at her incredulously. "This isn't an isolated event, it's worldwide. I'm in charge of gaining control of the Nightwings and Rainwings, my best friend is getting the Sandwing's and Icewings, and the one you met earlier has been reassigned and is now in charge of getting the Mudwing's, Skywing's and Seawing's."

"What about the academy?" Glory asked.

"The academy is already on our side."

That didn't make any sense. I spoke to her friends just yesterday. Had they left that part out? No, this Nightwing was keeping something from her, and she had to figure it out. *Stop being so paranoid,* She scolded herself. He's trying to help you! She suddenly thought about what Deathbringer would say. He would probably find a way to agree with her that would sound like arguing.

"So," he says. "Do we have a deal?"

Glory ought again for a second. Does she really trust this dragon? She needed a bit of time. "I'll think about it, and will have my

answer in 5 days."

The Nightwing smiles friendlily, "that is agreeable."

"Would you like a place to stay? We have plenty of-"

"As generous as that is, I must rendezvous with my team."

"Do you think I could meet them?"

"No, if I bring guest's I will not make it on time."

"Understood," Glory said, but she didn't understand. Did this dragon possess some secret flying knowledge that she didn't? But she kept that to herself and allowed the dragon to leave.

I should probably check the seer's organization, Glory thought. Ever since they had discovered that nightwing powers were affected by the moons, those born with powerful seer abilities were selected to work for the queen, documenting any significant events that were likely to happen in the future.

That can wait, Glory thought, she had to get back to Deathbringer. He had been home the entire day alone, and though Glory had told them to check on him every now and then, she just had to make sure. Besides, as far as she knew, there was nothing left to do.

Of course... the queen was never done with work... 3 police officers found her and pulled her aside.

"We investigated the Rainwing," the officer explained. "Turned out to be a false alarm, he was high on some mushrooms. Just thought I should let you know."

Glory thanked the police for their work, then continued on her way home. When she finally arrived home, Deathbringer was laying on the floor, motionless.

"Deathbringer," she said, growing nervous. However, there was no answer; the Nightwing remained immobile on the floor.

"Deathbringer?!" She asked again, with much more urgency than

before. Again, there was no answer. Glory ran over to him and began shaking him awake desperately. "Deathbringer?!"

"What! What!" Deathbringer startled awake, jumping up. "What is it? Are you ok?"

"You scared the scales off of me!" Glory scolded, a bit louder than she meant to. "I come back from a long day to see you laying there, not responsive! I thought you were dead!"

He scoffed. "Well excuse me for getting some rest, something you told me to do!"

Glory, though she would never admit it, suddenly felt guilty for exploding on him. He *had* been struck by lightning only a few days ago. And she *had* told him to get some rest. But didn't she mention any of that?

"So, what happened today?" he said, stretching. He had this tired look in his eyes as if he had been hard at work. "Tell me *everything."* And Glory knew that it was her imagination, but...

Was that hostility in his voice?

Eat Well

It was just past midnight when Venom decided to take Deathbringer on a joyride. He pulled the nightwing from the bed and forced him clumsily down the hall, shooting out black tendrils to pull them along whenever Deathbringer resisted too much. By the time they were out of the palace and in the air, Deathbringer had completely given up on resisting and decided that it'd be best for his health if he just went along with the symbiote's plan.

That was a nice dream, Venom said as if to break the awkward silence. Deathbringer ignored the symbiote, though he had to admit he agreed. In the dream, he had been the hero in his favorite comic from when he was younger, The Dark Knightwing Rises, and was beating up the bad guys. Though looking back, it felt quite embarrassing that a grown dragon such as himself was having dreams a dragonet would have.

Don't be embarrassed, Venom said teasingly. **It makes it too fun for me.**

"Where are we going, anyway?" Deathbringer asked impatiently. They had been flying for quite a while. He had to admit that he usually enjoyed flying with Venom, flying much faster than a normal dragon would find physically possible; though he figured he'd enjoy it more if he wasn't a prisoner in his own body; but despite this, it was starting to get annoying.

Well if I told you, I wouldn't get to feel the utter and complete shock inside of you, Venom explained, with a smirk that Deathbringer could *feel.* Deathbringer rolled his eyes and purposefully said some nasty things about Venom as loud as he could in his head. The symbiote only laughed.

Something back shot up from the ground, barreling at Deathbringer at a frightening speed. Frightening to Deathbringer, at least. However, Venom dodged with nothing but a minor annoyance. **I**

***bet* I know who that is.**

Venom dropped down and landed with a thud on the dirt. Deathbringer noticed right away that the dirt here was rough, *dry* even. Not just that, but it seemed almost brittle as if all of the things keeping it together had been sucked away. But Deathbringer didn't have much time to think about that as multiple strange creatures appeared from the trees. They were dragons (at least, they might have been at some point), but very different. For example, one dragon was a nightwing, his eyes replaced with a black void with a red dot in the middle, and his entire left cheek was torn away, revealing rotten gums and oversized, sharp teeth.

There were 4 "dragons" in total, 2 rainwings, a nightwing, and a sandwing, all with horrific features in different places; there was only one common factor: blacked-out, red eyes.

"You're late," the nightwing said, his voice coarse and grainy.

"*You're* empty-handed," Venom retorted snarkily, and the dragon growled. **"In fact, you're *all* empty-handed. Care to explain yourselves?"**

"We don't all have the luxury of hiding in plain sight!" the sandwing butted in. "Besides, it's much more dangerous now that the Cawthon is here."

"So you really have nothing?" Venom asked incredulously. *Who is the Cawthon?* Deathbringer wondered, but his question went unheard and unanswered. This seemed to strike a nerve with one of the rainwings, who stepped forward.

"Look, just because Twisted decided to give you a big role in this mission doesn't mean you're Mr. Bigshot, we all remember what happened," the rainwing gave a smug grin, and Deathbringer felt anger building up inside of him. Suddenly, a black tendril shot out and yanked the dragon towards Death-Venom, *It's Venom,* Deathbringer reminded himself, who grabbed the dragon by the horns and twisted violently, snapping his neck.

"Anyone else wanna bring it up?" Venom challenged, and

Deathbringer reminded himself again that it was Venom who had done it, not himself. The other dragon shuffled backward. "**That's what I thought. And since you idiots failed to do your one job, I guess I'll have to feed myself.**"

Venom unhinged Deathbringer's jaw and made him bite down on the body. The blood gushed into his mouth and onto his face, covering his snout in the thick red liquid. He ripped away, throwing his head back to devour the flesh, before going down for another bite. Deathbringer was helpless to do anything as he was forced to simply endure. The worst part was that he *didn't* find the taste repulsive, in fact, he found it somewhat enjoyable.

After Venom decided he had made his point, he looked back up at the other creatures, who were looking at Venom in disgust, which only made the symbiote grin.

"Twisted will be hearing about this," the other rainwing warned him. Venom scoffed.

"Is that supposed to scare me?" Venom asked condescendingly, though Deathbringer could tell that Twisted, whoever he may be, still held some kind of weight for Venom. The other dragon shook their heads and walked away while Venom finished his meal.

"I am never doing that again," Deathbringer promised when they finished, causing the symbiote to laugh.

You think that you have a choice? Venom asked, then barked a laugh. **You lost your right to choose the moment I latched onto you in that storm. Besides, you weren't eating well as you promised, so I decided to take matters into my own hands**

Deathbringer was yanked back into the air and they began their journey back to the palace.

"What are you doing?" Deathbringer panicked. "I can't go back to the palace like this!"

Venom suddenly veered down, crashing the two into a river, before popping back out, leaving Deathbringer gasping.

You're such a baby, Venom remarked with another chuckle. When they made it back to the palace, Glory was still sound asleep. To Deathbringer's horror, Venom slowly approached Glory's sleeping body. He examined the rainwing closely, marking which scales changed with colors and when.

"Don't you dare," Deathbringer whispered, and Venom chuckled once again, which was *really* starting to get on Deathbringer's nerves.

Relax, momma bear, Venom told him. **She's too important to kill.**

Before Deathbringer could ask what that meant, Venom threw him onto the bed and put him to sleep, muttering something. He couldn't quite hear what he was saying, but he could make out one sentence.

Those damn Nightmares.

Encounter

Once again, Deathbringer had been left home alone with Venom. The symbiote had told Deathbringer that he had no orders today, so Deathbringer was in control for today as long as he didn't do anything to piss the symbiote off. However, following last night's events, Deathbringer had way too many questions to keep bottled up inside of him.

"What are you, exactly?" Deathbringer asked, and the symbiote shrugged.

I could've sworn we've been over this already, Venom stated.

"Well, if you're regularly going to be taking my body on joyrides whenever you feel like it, I should at least know who you are," Deathbringer countered, and Venom sighed.

Fine, Venom agreed. **I am Venom. A Class-03 Klyntaar, or symbiote if you prefer, and a member of the Nightmares. We feast on organs, and if we don't eat well enough, we are forced to consume the vital organs of our hosts. Happy?**

"Who are the Nightmares?" Deathbringer wondered. He remembered hearing that name before, but he couldn't put his claw on exactly where.

Your new employers, Venom said in a way that told Deathbringer he wasn't going to get much more from that.

"Is Twisted also a part of the Nightmares?"

Yeah, he's running the operation.

"Why is everyone so afraid of him?"

Cause they've heard the rumors of his power, of his strength.

"What rumors?"

Damn you sure ask a lot of questions, don't you?

"Well, I-"

I'm hungry, time to hunt.

Deathbringer was thrown out of bed and out the open window as they flew at incredible speed.

"Where are we going?!" Deathbringer shouted to be heard over the wind.

You don't have to shout, I'm inside you, nitwit. And we're going to hunt some *big* game.

Deathbringer stared baffled as they left the coast behind and continued flying toward the endless sea. After what felt like forever, they finally came to a stop in the middle of the ocean, then dropped a couple of meters below the surface.

Listen, feel. Venom told the nightwing, and Deathbringer listened. He abandoned his sense of sight and smell and allowed his other senses to take full control. He was more sensitive to... what was that? Vibrations? Some kind of sixth sense that allowed him to just *know* where things were around him.

I'll let you figure it out from here, Venom said as Deathbringer felt control return to him. Surprisingly, the nightwing found that he was not desperate for air, despite being underwater for more than a minute already. What did Venom want him to do exactly? He was swimming in an endless blue abyss, with nothing but water on all sides. The sheer size and depth of the ocean triggered some kind of anxiety, and Deathbringer couldn't focus.

Spiders.

A sensation of spiders crawling behind Deathbringer suddenly burst throughout his scales, and Deathbringer could somehow *see* behind him without turning. He saw a shark that charged him, and nearly gasped; the shark was as big as him! He knew he didn't have the reaction time to save himself but he tried anyway. And then something strange happened... Deathbringer was *certain* the shark

would get him, but with a speed that wasn't his, he dodged out of the way, throwing himself several meters out of the way without meaning to; even the shark seemed to be confused before spinning around to attack again.

We got ourselves a fighter here! Venom proclaimed, clearly enjoying the show. The same speed-up effect happened once again whenever the shark got too close. The nightwing tested it a couple of times, surely frustrating the shark, but allowing him to get used to what he experienced as a sudden slow of time.

The next time the shark came around, Deathbringer flipped above the shark and stabbed the shark with his claws. Well, he meant to just use his claws, but he underestimated his own strength and ended up putting his entire talon through its head, causing blood to spread across the water. Inside his head, Venom cheered and took control again, grabbing the corpse and bursting from the water. They eventually reached a small island, just big enough to fit 10 dragons bundled tightly. Venom landed, dropping the corpse and beginning to dig in immediately. Not 3 minutes later, only the skeleton remained. Venom relinquished control of Deathbringer and they collapsed to the floor to rest.

I haven't eaten that well in years, Venom admitted. **Good job, Deathbringer. Maybe you're not totally useless after all.**

"What was that? How did I slow time like that?" Deathbringer asked. Venom scoffed.

I may be strong, but time manipulation is outside my ballpark, Venom explained. **It's one of the many abilities I've picked up during my life. It's omnidirectional awareness, as well as enhanced reflexes.**

"Cool," Deathbringer admired. Despite having just eaten his weight in shark, while he wasn't hungry, he wasn't particularly full either.

Wait, Deathbringer's ear flicked up and he listened closely. There was a whistling... Not a dragon whistling but the kind when something flies through the air fast. It was far away, but quickly approaching. *There!* A small blue projectile flying towards them.

Despite the enhanced reflexes, the object flew too fast for Deathbringer to dodge; he got about halfway through the action before the object hit him, blowing a hole in the nightwing large enough to insert a scroll sideways into.

The pain only should've lasted one moment, as Deathbringer would be dead the next; but Venom wasn't going to let that happen. The wound healed over almost instantly, and though the pain left Deathbringer immobile, Venom instantly reacted, jumping into the water and swimming down at max speed.

Dammit, dammit, dammit! Venom screamed in Deathbringer's head. **How'd they found us so fast?**

Venom swam down and down into the murky depths until they couldn't see a thing, then he kept going until even sound ceased to exist. **They won't be able to find us down here,** the symbiote assured him, his voice now but a whisper in Deathbringer's mind. The pressure down here was overwhelming and threatened to crush Deathbringer's very bones. They waited for a long time.

There was a brief sound of something splashing into the water overhead, before a hard impact on Deathbringer's head. The nightwing was knocked even further down, the pressure increasing tremendously. The enemy quickly found him again, scraping his belly then kicking him even further down with tremendous strength.

Dammit! They're trying to crush us! Venom realized, blindly maneuvering his body in an attempt to fight an enemy he couldn't see or hear. In an ironic twist, in this time of emergency, the *danger sense* seemed to be taking a day off.

Despite not being able to see them, Deathbringer could sense that whoever they were fighting was extremely skilled; they attacked with such speed and strength, and, despite having enhanced reflexes, whenever Venom swung where they had just attacked from, they were gone. Swimming up was not an option, as whenever they tried, their opponent would yank them back down and send them even further down.

They're going to run out of breath at some point, Venom assured Deathbringer, though the nightwing still had no idea who this *she* was. **Symbiotes don't need oxygen, but they're still a living thing.**

Even with this in mind, Deathbringer doubted that they would last that long. Venom was healing Deathbringer's wounds slower and slower, obviously growing tired from the mix of ice-cold water, overwhelming pressure, and never-ending barrage of attacks.

Suddenly, another sharp pressure latched onto Deathbringer's hind legs as he received another punch to the throat. *Sharks,* Deathbringer thought as he felt more of that pressure appear around his body.

They'll be distracted by the sharks, that's our cue! Venom launched up to the surface. Light! It was faint but it was there, and it was getting brighter! As they reached the top, their attacker seized them once again; except now, Venom could see, and so could Deathbringer. Now, he could see that the dragon, though it was the shape of one, really wasn't a dragon at all; its scales were some kind of shiny, bluish silver metal alloy, and the only parts of his wings were the spines where the bones should be. A long blade protruded from one of his wrists, with a somewhat luminescent blue edge. It had a symbol etched into the material that Deathbringer couldn't make out.

A soldier of Cawthon? Venom exclaimed in astonishment. The soldier shoves the blade deep into Deathbringer's chest, then pulls it to the side, nearly cutting Deathbringer in half. Finally being able to see his opponent, Venom punched the soldier square in the chest, knocking their enemy out of sight. They finally reached the surface and bolted towards the mainland, hoping that once they were around other dragons, the assassin would let up.

The assassin burst from the water again, and Venom's side. The symbiote screamed and turned, quickly receiving a hard punch to the snout. The symbiote was knocked back into the water as the soldier's front talons shifted and changed into unfamiliar mechanisms that shot bright blue energy that tore through Deathbringer and Venom and out the other side.

DAMMIT! He's gonna kill us! Venom cursed, sending out tentacles to wrap around the soldier, but the blade reemerged and cut through them instantly. **Any ideas? Cause I'm out!**

Deathbringer analyzed their enemy as they maneuvered gracefully. However, he noticed that even though the movements were graceful, they were also somewhat rigid, obviously blocked by the armor or whatever it was.

"We have to get close," Deathbringer decided. "Lock up his joints, that'll slow him down."

Here goes nothing, Venom said, launching himself toward the soldier, who was obviously surprised by this change in tactics. The symbiote seized the soldier by the neck while simultaneously shooting out tentacles that wrapped around the soldier's joints before kicking him down and shooting upward, bursting from the surface and tearing toward the mainland. **I can't believe that actually worked!**

"Me neither," Deathbringer said honestly. They flew in silence until they reached the castle. Only a couple of minutes had passed, leaving them the rest of the day to recover.

You're really not as useless as you look, Venom said, though there was something about it this time; a hint of genuine affection. But it was quickly replaced by the usual smugness. **Seriously, I don't see why Glory hasn't tapped that yet.**

"Don't even start," Deathbringer warned, getting into bed. His mind drifted back to the soldier's bright eyes. "Who was that?"

No idea, Venom said. **All I know is that he was a soldier of Cawthon. Before you ask, they're a group made to oppose the Nightmares, and there are more like him. We have protection from them, though. We only got attacked because we were outside the safe zone.**

Deathbringer sighed. What was happening? His life was spiraling out of control with monsters and strange creatures at the wheel. Metal soldiers? Was that even possible? *Probably not,* Deathbringer

decided, realizing that it didn't matter what he thought; the only thing he could do was hang on for the ride.

Alternate

Some things you must know about me:
1. There are very few times in history, that something had happened, and I didn't predict it.
2. I do not die easily
3. I do not take well to traitors
4. Everything I say is relevant... So you best be paying attention.

~~~~~~

For the next week, life continues relatively smoothly. It was difficult trying the put the kingdom back together after such a disastrous event, but luckily, everything went as planned. The only thing that isn't as it was supposed to be, was Deathbringer.

Ever since he was struck, he hadn't been the same. He'd been acting secretive, a bit hostile, and always really tired even though he was supposed to stay inside all day. He was starting to scare Glory. When she brought it up to him, he had brushed her off; saying it was just her imagination. As worrying as it had been, she had to consider that he *was* struck by lightning; it makes sense that he'd act different after having a near-death experience. So, as much as it had pained her, he had continued doing her queenly duties.

On one particular day, she came back to the palace to find that Deathbringer was nowhere to be found.

"Deathbringer," She called but received no answer. However, this didn't worry her all too much. He had begun healing faster and faster, improving with each passing day. Now, it was not uncommon for Deathbringer to go out and run errands or train.

She laid down in a little hammock and sighed. As much as Glory hated to admit it, she had been missing him lately. She was always so busy with her queenly duties that she never had time just to be with him, and even when she was home he was always so... Distant.
~~~~~~

Suddenly, the door opened, and Deathbringer walked in, humming. She pretended to be asleep, and breathed rhythmically, letting her scales shift random colors. He stopped suddenly, and Glory wondered if he had noticed she was awake. But he just shook his head at something and sat down next to the bed. He had done this for years now, posting himself by her side, guarding her, protecting her.

"I can't do that," he said suddenly, seemingly talking to himself. "I told you before, I'm not killing another dragon. I promised myself, and I promised Glory."

What was he talking about? Who was he talking to? Surely he couldn't be talking to someone telepathically, could he? No, he was not a mind reader; as much as he seemed to know about Glory with just a look sometimes (an annoying trait), it was physically impossible for him to be a mind reader. So who was he talking to? Himself? No, he would've been more careful, even if he thought she was asleep.

He sighed, and Glory thought she could see him wipe a tear away from his eye. She pretended to be just now waking up, and he straightened himself and sniffled a bit, but then reverted to his old, sarcastic self. He greeted her with a bow and wink.

"Hello my queen," he said in a high-pitched voice.

Glory chuckled nervously, still confused by his behavior. She thought of the Omniverse's words, about the klyntaar, about strange behaviour... Was Deathbringer really infected? She tried to shake that thought from her head, surely she was being paranoid, or over-analyzing something; surely, *her* Deathbringer couldn't be evil... right?

"Hello?" He said, waving his talon in front of Glory's face "Sexy Nightwing Assasin to sexy Rainwing queen! Hellooooooo?"

Glory swatted his hands away and managed to hide her blush. He was looking much better now that the burns had mostly healed. There were still a few blisters here and there, but they were barely noticeable.

"Hello, Deathbringer," she responded, trying her best to sound sleepy.

"Tiring day?" He asked, and Glory nodded. Even though she hadn't done much physical activity that day. "You know, I'm ready to start being your bodyguard again."

"Ok," Glory agreed. She didn't particularly disagree with him. He had made tremendous progress in the last week, and, she missed him during the day. Though she expected that she would get tired of him very quickly.

"Wait, what?" He wondered, not sure if he heard the queen correctly.

"Ok," Glory repeated. "You've made tremendous progress over the week, and these guards aren't fun to talk to."

Deathbringer smirked at her. "Awww, you miss me?"

Glory rolled her eyes when a knock sounded at the door. When she opened it, Omniverse is standing there. He was standing there in a strangely optimistic mood and looked at Glory with a smile.

"Have you come to a decision yet?" He asked politely. "I know it's only been 3 days, but I was hoping we could speed this up since I'm on-"

He abruptly stopped mid-sentence and stared at something behind Glory. She looked over her shoulder and saw Deathbringer staring intently at the nightwing. Glory wondered if they knew each other, but before she could ask, the Omniverse grabbed Glory and threw her behind him as Deathbringer lunged.

The bodyguard collided with Omniverse, grabbing him, rolling, then throwing him against the wall, before grabbing him again and pinning him on the floor. Glory tried to grab the Deathbringer off, but he pushed her away with tremendous strength and continued grappling with the other nightwing.

Some strange red substance enveloped the Omniverse's claws, and he punched Deathbringer, sending him across the room. The

nightwing stood as Deathbringer came at him, then suddenly disappeared. The ex-assassin look around frantically before Omniverse reappeared behind him, grabbed Deathbringer, and threw him against the wall. The same red substances covered his claws and he threw another punch.

Deathbringer, with a burst of strength, parried the attack and punched the nightwing across the room. With a strange skill, Omniverse bounced off the wall and rammed Deathbringer again. He seized the ex-assassin by the throat and open his mouth, preparing to spew fire. As he shot it out, Deathbringer upper-cut the Nightwing, causing red energy to blast through the roof, completely obliterating it.

AN ANIMUS! Glory thought, slamming herself into the nightwing, but the Omniverse used her own force against her and threw her, then made a deep gash in Deathbringer's shoulder. Deathbringer howled in pain as the Omniverse took his back and put his talons on the nightwing's temples. The same red energy appeared and forced itself into Deathbringer's head then back into the Nightwing's arms as Deathbringer screamed in pain. Glory ran towards the 2 dragons but was forced back by some strange force and pinned against the wall.

As the energy flow continues, a strange black mass seems to separate from Deathbringer. Deathbringer screams in agony as this thing is ripped from within him.

"GET OUT OF HIM!" Omniverse yelled at the creature. The black mass suddenly came to life and reached back, grabbing the nightwing and throwing him with incredible strength. Omniverse tumbled through the air, breaking through the wall and tumbling to the forest floor. The black mass merged with Deathbringer, his handsome face overcome by a diseased, hellish creature, as they chased flew after him. Glory was finally freed by the mysterious force and arrived at the scene to see Omniverse on the ground, covered by a translucent red shield as the creature that used to be Deathbringer pounded it.

"REWIND!" Omniverse screamed, and with a blast of red energy, it never happened.

What exactly in an inspiration room-- OH MY GOSH!

"Awww, you missed-" Deathbringer stopped himself abruptly. What just happened? Wasn't he just fighting? Who... what? So many questions raced through Deathbringer's mind. Was it possible that it had all been a figment of his imagination?

It was the mystic! Venom growled. **It wasn't your imagination. All that stuff you saw when Glory opened the door was real. He has the power to manipulate time, but usually, we're left clueless as to what happened, but this time... We remembered somehow.**

There was that same knock at the door, but this time, when Glory went to open it, Deathbringer stopped her. "I'll get it," he insisted, trying to sound calm. He opened the door, and everything else, everything that would happen, and everything that had happened ceased to exist for just a second, as he became acutely aware of everything in that present moment. And then he was back, the strange nightwing was there, except, this time, he seemed a lot less optimistic and a lot more tired. He had long, elegant wings, with crimson red edges. His eyes, or eye, since his left eye was missing, were also a strange red, but not evil... more hypnotizing.

"Hi, Glo-" the nightwing started, but stopped, his eyes going wide. "How?"

"Omniverse?" Glory said from behind him. The nightwing quickly straightened himself out and returned to smiling tiredly.

"Queen Glory," he greeted as Glory pushed Deathbringer away. "It's good to see you. I was just coming to confirm whether or not you had made a decision.

"Of course," Glory said regally. "You have partial jurisdiction over my kingdom. Though I will have to be informed before any big

decisions are made."

"Of course," he said, then looked at Deathbringer. "You're Deathbringer, right? I heard that you got struck by lightning."

"Twice," Deathbringer corrected, still a bit disoriented and wary.

"Amazing. You will have to tell me about it, it could bring a lot of new information to light." Something about the way the nightwing said that... It didn't bode well.

"Anyway," Omniverse continued. "My boss will be here soon to talk to you, while I look over the Kingdoms he gained. Hopefully, this will all be over soon."

There was a slight twinge in Deathbringer's mind, something like a tugging at the back of his brain. **Now?** Venom questioned in an annoyed voice.

"There's apparently a virou going around, along with a gang or cult of some kind. They're offering us protection."

"Can't we protect ourselves?" Deathbringer questioned as Venom cursed inside of his mind.

"I thought so, but hen he explained it to me, I realized it was much bigger than any of us."

"Excuse me please," Deathbringer found himself saying, before flying out of the hut toward... who knows where?

It's time you meet the brains of this operation. Venom decided, continuing to pull Deathbringer further into the forest.

"Twisted?" Deathbringer asked, which Venom confirmed. They reached a ravine of some sort, and the nightwing's stomach clenched. To his despair, the symbiote pulled them toward the old nightwing tunnels. Venom tried to bring Deathbringer into the tunnels, but the nightwing resisted, refusing the move.

A million memories flooded back to Deathbringer all at once. His starvation, his brutal training, watching his friend die in the lava.

He thought that he had left it all behind when he had made his desperate escape beside Glory and Starflight. But now... to go back...

Stop being such a baby. Twisted doesn't like to wait! Venom warned him, and realizing he had no other choice, Deathbringer slowly walked into the tunnel, closing his eyes and taking deep breaths. He forced himself to think something lighter and more optimistic than the nightwing island, like the plague.

Turn right, Venom commanded. The nightwing did as he was told, and walked forward. Sure enough, it opened up into another black tunnel. Venom led him deeper into the passageway making so many twists and turns he lost count until ahead of him he could see a metal door. Suddenly, though he didn't feel it happen until it was done, his snout was tied closed, along with his wings and talons, and he was pressed to the floor.

"Move and I'll make you wish you were dead," she had a knife pressed to neck so tightly that Deathbringer had to constrict his breathing to not be cut. "What are you doing here?"

"Calm down Z-20. It's me." Venom said through Deathbringer's snout, taking control.

"Venom?" she asked, slowly releasing Deathbringer. Deathbringer saw that this was another strange, torn up dragon, this one a rainwing. "This is the form you chose?"

"I couldn't be too picky, considering I only had 2 hours in this dimension before complete cellular decay. Where's the boss?"

"Where he always is," the dragon replied, rolling her eyes. "In his 'inspiration' room."

Venom nodded and walked through the metal door, which opened for him automatically. He walked through metal corridors, reaching multiple checkpoints where Venom had to input a password until they reached a door with words written in blood, though Deathbringer couldn't read it.

What you are about to see will be very unnerving, but do NOT react. Do not say anything, do not do anything, do not touch anything. Just... stay cool.

This only made Deathbringer more worried, but Venom didn't seem to notice; and with that, Deathbringer was pulled inside of the dimly lit room, with dead dragons hung from the ceiling. Nooses tied them to hooks on the ceiling, though it was clear that's not how many of them died. Most were rainwings and nightwings, but there were some from every tribe. The worst part was due to them being at different heights, ranging from their tails limp on the ground to high above their head, sometimes blood would drip onto Deathbringer, making him recoil and end up bumping into another corpse. They all had horrible slashes with a blade-like weapon, and some of them had their guts ripped out, which now laid spilled on the floor... Had somebody been eating them?

A voice not at all like Deathbringer was expecting suddenly spoke. This voice wasn't demonic, or blatantly evil... It was actually somewhat smooth, the only thing unsettling with the sinister intent that laced his voice. "Welcome, Deathbringer, to your new future."

Twisted The Fox

"Welcome, Deathbringer, to your new future," the voice said, though, no matter which way he looked the nightwing looked couldn't find the owner of the voice, but he didn't get to look long as he was suddenly forced down into a bow.

"You called," Venom stated respectfully. Deathbringer could barely stand being so close to the blood that covered the floor. He could see chains moving in the distance as the creature approached.

"Yes, yes I did. Well, my first thought was to make sure you were alright. I sensed the shift in time and figured that could only mean that you were in trouble. But, you're all right, aren't you?"

"Well-" Venom started, but he was interrupted by the creature jumping out from behind one of the bodies wielding a pitch-black blade. Venom let out what could only be described as a squeak and threw Deathbringer backward, hitting a body and tumbling to the floor. The creature was some sort of anthropomorphic fox with scars covering its body and a hook on his right hand... The hook.

Deathbringer swore the hook looked familiar, but he couldn't put his claw on it. The creature laughed heartily, and Deathbringer found his laugh surprisingly infectious. Venom only grumbled.

"Alright, get off the floor before I kill you like your son," his tone changed completely, turning from friendly to deadly in an instant, and Venom hurriedly stood up. As soon as he did, the fox returned to being friendly, however, that bit of sinister intent still laced his voice. "Come here, let me get a look at you!"

The fox got extremely close to Deathbringer's face and smiled, brushing the flatter part of his hook against the nightwing's face. Deathbringer's muscles tensed as Twisted brushed along them as if trying to sense his strength. This continued for much too long, Twisted simply examining every inch of Deathbringer.

"Fascinating," he commented with a twisted smile. His eyes contained deep, deep insanity and a violent mania that could be released at any moment. Deathbringer knew that, without a doubt, this creature in front of him was the most dangerous thing on the continent.

"He will make a great host," the fox suddenly proclaimed, standing up and turning away. "Especially with his relationship with the queen, he will be able to influence things in our favor."

"Influence what?" Deathbringer finally asked the question on his mind. "You still haven't told me what we are going to be working together on."

The fox looked at Deathbringer, or rather, Venom, incredulously. "You haven't told him?"

"You told me to keep it on a need-to-know," Venom countered, the fox only groaned.

"Well, HE needs to know!" the fox yelled, then sighed and snapped his fingers. Green sparks appear from his hands and traveled around the room, shaping into long, interlocking lines and shapes that eventually formed a dazzling elaborate web.

"We are all familiar with the universe, and maybe the multiverse-," the creature explained, talking like a professor. "But what if I told you that was only a portion of our existence?"

The shapes slowly began to come together, creating large clusters of green light around the room.

"This is the Spectroverse. Each spectrum contains no less than a billion multiverses, and our mission is to control one multiverse in every Spectrum, starting with this dimension, then moving on to others. You dig?"

"What do you mean by *control*?" Deathbringer asked, but immediately regretted it as the fox smiled wickedly.

"The destruction of your world," green flames spewed out of the fox's eyes as he said this in a truly *evil* tone. "Nightmares haven't

had a homeworld in quite some time, so we're going to take yours, even if it means killing everyone and everything in this dimension!"

This was worse than Deathbringer feared. They weren't trying to create a new world, they were only trying to destroy this one. "How would that benefit you?!" Deathbringer shouted impulsively. "If everything's dead then there'd be nothing to make it a good homeworld!"

Twisted's hand shot out and grasped Deathbringer by the throat, his grip like iron. "I did *not* give you permission to speak freely," the fox stated, somehow still looking amused. "But, I know you're new to this, so I'll simply let you off with a warning."

But even after saying this, he held onto Deathbringer for several more seconds before letting him go, leaving him gasping for air. "As for your question, that is really none of my concern, nor is it yours. I'm given worlds to dominate, and I dominate them; and from now on, I give you orders, and you'll follow them."

So even a creature as feared as this one was taking orders from someone else? How high did this chain of command go? Did they also have a queen of their own? So many questions, but he had a feeling that if he asked them, he'd get another choke.

"Now," The fox continued, the web changing to zoom into one cluster, continuing to zoom in to one line in particular. "If you were to help us, we can guarantee you and Glory safety. She will be all yours. All you have to do is help us out."

The web suddenly disappeared, the sparks coming together to form a new image. Two figures in the relative shapes of dragons were nuzzling each other lovingly, and it didn't take long for Deathbringer to realize that they were depicting him and Glory. "It will just be you an her, for eternity, nothing left to do but get it on!"

I know what you're about to ask, and it's stupid. Venom said to Deathbringer, but the nightwing didn't listen; his curiosity overtaking his fear. If he really was going to let this... creature, take his world, if he was going to live the rest of his with Glory, this was something that had to be resolved.

"What happened with Venom's son?"

Rogue, The Lesbian Badass

Twisted's face dropped from a smile to a snarl. All at once, the figures disappeared, leaving them in complete darkness other than Twisted's glowing green eyes.

"What?" The Nightmare questioned in a voice so condescending it made Deathbringer want to shrink into oblivion. **Answer confidently, but not without fear.** Venom instructed him, and as contradictory as those instructions were, he did his best to follow them.

"E-earlier, you told Venom that y-you'd kill him like you did his s-son," Deathbringer said, his confidence from earlier leaving him in his time of need. "I-if I'm going t-to live a life w-with Glor-ry, I need to know..."

"His son was a traitor, and so, per tradition, we had to kill him in the most violent way possible," Twisted interjected, and Venom made a strangled noise. "I can promise you, as long as your child doesn't actively get in our way, they will not be harmed."

Venom made another strangled noise, and Deathbringer decided that he'd question it later. Twisted's face returned to its normal, amused looking self. "Now, if you are going to be a part of this operation, there are a few dragons I will need you to slaughter."

It took Deathbringer a moment to process what the creature actually said. He had said it so nonchalantly-- so naturally-- that the nightwing hand;t really thought much of it until the words fully processed in his brain.

"Wait, what?" Deathbringer realized after a few seconds.

"You heard me. If you're going to be a part of our operation, I'm gonna need you to kill some dragons. They're just a few individuals that may cause problems in our plans."

Gears turned slowly in Deathbringer's brain. He had made a promise, that if he met someone he cared about, he'd give up the life of an assassin; and he had, he had met Glory... If he did this, he'd be betraying Glory, himself, and every dragon in Pyrrhia...

"I can't be a part of that," Deathbringer decided."I promised-"

Twisted's face hardens once again, suddenly grabbing the nightwing by his horn and yanking his head sideways. His eyes spewed malevolent green flames. At first, Deathbringer had thought that maybe it was some kind of power granted by an animus object. Flames that looked cool but didn't radiate any heat; how else would the fox survive otherwise? But now, with Twisted so close to him, he could *feel* his lapse in judgment.

"Look," he demands, his voice now demonic. "What don't you understand here? I don't give a crap about who you promised or what. I have an agent in your head, so you're going to do whatever the frick I tell you to do, whether you agree to it or not. So why not agree to something you're going to do anyway and get something for it?"

Just agree to it. You can't win. Venom growled at him, but Deathbringer refused. He refused to return to being a tool someone used to get the job done! So, he stood his ground, even as Twisted used his horn as leverage to throw the nightwing across the massive room. The lights came back on soon after... Had his fur grown redder? When Deathbringer had first seen the fox, his fur seemed somewhat thin, as if it had been cut recently, but now it was longer... Perhaps it was just the nightwings imagination.

"I HAVE AN IDEA!!" the fox exclaims suddenly. "How about you get out of my face before I claw out your liver and shove it so far up your butt you'll taste it and go think about it for a day? Yes! I am such a genius! Get! OUT!"

Deathbringer didn't need to be told twice. The nightwing bolted out of the nightwing at top speed. He slammed through to the door, tore down the hallway, and hastily navigated the tunnels, refusing to stop until he was standing at the entrance to the nightwing tunnel. He took a moment to gasp for air and to consider what he

had just been told; but no matter how much he thought about it, he failed the wrap his head around the concept. He was expected to assist in the destruction of Pyrrhia? Not only that, but he was working for a creature whose soul was made up of complete insanity? He couldn't do that!

But then again, what was the alternative? Decline the deal and then be killed anyway? Was it better to take the deal and get the benefits, or to decline the deal and die doing the right thing? Even if he *did* accept, how would he know if Twisted would keep his word? He hated this dilemma!

My son was a traitor, but he was fighting for what was right, Venom said sadly, stuck on his own train of thought. **He saw the error in the Nightmare's ways, and he arranged a revolution... I-I thought they would help...**

He told the Nightmares about his son, Deathbringer realized. *And he regrets it to this day...*

They killed him, Venom said. **They put him in a 100-degree room and raised the temperature by 1 every minute. He died at 298 degrees. Don't you get it, Deathbringer? You can't fight the Nightmares... No one can...**

"That can't be true," Deathbringer said stubbornly. "I-if there was really no one to fight the Nightmares, then they would have taken over everything right? Like the Cawthons!"

Venom was quiet, filling Deathbringer's mind with hesitant silence. There was another way that Venom wasn't telling him! "Venom, they killed your son! Don't you want revenge?"

Venom growled. **There's a being, a descendant of the god that created the multiverse. He's fought the Nightmares for billions of years.**

"Then why don't we go to them?" Deathbringer asked, his hopes rising; however, they were knocked back down soon after with Venom's sigh. **We're on opposites sides of a war, Deathbringer, he'll kill us on sight.**

Deathbringer groaned in frustration, pacing back and forth. "Why does everyone want to kill everything?!"

I know that's not coming from the dragon named Deathbringer, Venom retorted sassily, making Deathbringer groan. There *had* to be another way! A way to win! If his time with Glory had taught him anything, it was that there is always a way, he just had to think...

But who was he kidding? He wasn't a Dragonet Of Destiny, he never stopped a war, he never even got a formal education! How in Pyrrhia was he supposed to stop a creature as powerful as that?!

Feeling defeated, he rose into the air and began flying back towards the palace. Even as he flew, his mind raced back and forth between his choices as he tried to find some kind of suitable alternative, but he came up empty. *Why isn't Venom trying harder?* he thought, annoyed that the symbiote wasn't even trying to solve this. "Don't you want to avenge your son?!"

What do you want me to say?! Venom suddenly shouted inside of Deathbringer's head, loud enough to make the nightwing sway dizzily. **There's nothing we can do! There's nothing YOU can do. The only people who can help us will kill us on sight! So what is there to say? Do you want me to comfort you? To tell you it will be all right? Well, NEWS FLASH, it's not gonna be ok! Everyone you know and love is going to be tortured, raped, and killed! So Deathbringer, what do you want me to-**

Something suddenly crashed into Deathbringer's side, knocking the air out of him and pushing him towards the ground. The nightwing's attacker didn't miss a beat, grappling him even as they hurdled through the air. By the time Deathbringer had come back to his senses, he was dazed once again as he slammed against the forest floor with the attacker on top of him.

Goddammit! It's her! Venom cursed, his voice providing the anchor the nightwing needed to focus himself. His vision was blurry, but he could still make out that the dragon attacking him seemed to be some kind of hybrid, primarily icewing with mostly white scales, but also some of the orange scales and wide wings of a

Skywing.

"Don't resist," she commanded as if Deathbringer was going to listen. He growled and reached out to bite her, but she quickly counteracted this with a throat punch. "What did I *just* say?"

Deathbringer growled and continued to attack, but every time she knew just how to counteract it! She moved with startling speed and efficiency, not bothering with theatrics or intimidation. Her tail wrapped around his neck and pinned his head, while her talons pinned the rest of him. "Finally!" she exclaimed with an exasperated sigh. "It would be so much easier if I could knock you out, or just, jab my tail into your jugular. I mean, why have an ultra-sharp poisonous tail if I can't use it?"

Deathbringer lashed out again, this time with his tail, but she whipped around and caught it in her mouth, her sharp teeth tearing into his scales, drawing blood. Eventually, she let go, spitting out the blood that had pooled in her mouth.

"Who are you?" Deathbringer asked, and the hybrid looked at him with weirdly friendly eyes.

"You can call me Rogue," she says. "Ultra inter-dimensional crime-fighting lesbian badass. Perhaps you've heard of me?"

It took a moment for Deathbringer to realize that she wasn't joking. "What do you want from me?"

"It's not what I want, it's what you need," she answered, only managing to confuse Deathbringer further. She brought her talon down gently onto his chest, pressing one claw slightly harder creating a small, clean cut. Not 3 seconds later, the wound stitched itself back together.

"I know Venom is in there with you," she informed him, her grip on his neck loosening. "I know about the Nightmares, I know everything. We're here to help you, and to save Pyrrhia."

Despite everything, Deathbringer's hopes rose again. Was this the chance that he had been hoping for just seconds ago? This could be

his chance!

Then again, life is never fair, now is it? So, just as he opened his mouth to accept her offer, she was blasted off of him by black energy. Rogue spun in the air and landed on her feet just barely quick enough to avoid the next blast. A crowd of the monster-dragons emerged from the trees, firing balls of their strange power hurdling toward her.

The hybrid moved with the grace of a trained dancer, weaving through the spaces in between balls of energy. The moment she was close enough, she spun and flipped and slashed. Thought she held no weapon, large gashes and lacerations appeared on her foes.

Her wings! Deathbringer realized after a moment. The ends of her wings served as blades in themselves, sharper than most weapon's Deathbringer used!

She cut through the crowd, flipping and dodging the blasts of energy. Their numbers fell, then dwindled, then bottomed out. Finally, to Deathbringer's dread, Venom took over and joined the fight.

"What are you doing?!" Deathbringer protested as Rogue finished off the last of the soldiers. "She's our way out!"

But the Klyntaarian didn't listen, lunging at the hybrid who backflipped away from danger. "Don't do this to yourself," she warned as Venom swung again, dodging just as easily. The symbiote refused to listen or speak, only attacked. "Fine! Have it your way!"

She ran circles around them, dashing and jumping and flipping as she slashed away at his defenses. Rogue wasn't able to cause much damage due to his incredible healing factor. Then again, Venom wasn't able to cause *any* damage due to her incredible reflexes and agility.

He took a particular fierce swing at her, and she slid under his wing before using their momentum to swing onto his back and stab her tail into his neck. Despite at least 20 cm of symbiote being between

Deathbringer and the outside world, the nightwing could feel some kind of needle being pressed into his neck.

"If you move, I will release my virus directly into your jugular artery," she warned. Her tone indicated that despite her earlier tenderness, she would have no problem killing him where he stood. "Even if you manage to kill me, not even Venom will be able to save you from your fate. Once the toxin takes effect, you will grow manic as it takes its toll on the brain. Your bodily systems will begin to fail you. You may piss and crap yourself. Your organs will fail and hemorrhage, and you will vomit blood. You will die, but it will be slow."

Both Venom and Deathbringer were frozen, both knowing they were stuck. So, realizing his defeat, the symbiote slowly sank back into Deathbringer's scales. "Here's what's going to happen," she growled at him, sticking to him like glue. "You're going to follow my instructions, and tell me exactly what the Nightmares are planning."

Again, Deathbringer was content with this alternative; he had been willing to help them since the very beginning! The fact that Venom was now being forced to comply only helped him! But, did you skip over some of the story? Because if you hadn't, you'd remember that life is not fair, and rarely ever goes your way.

There was high pitched whistling for a moment, the kind you hear in movies when a bomb is being dropped. There was no time to react! By the time he figured out what was happening the sword had already buried itself into the ground underneath them. A moment later, the blade exploded with black energy, eliciting shill screams of pain from both dragons and drowning them in a void of darkness.

Deathbringer awoke a few seconds later to find a large, light grey Klyntaarian standing over him with a smirk. The nightwing didn't even have a moment to be scared before Venom took over.

"**I had that!**" Venom insisted angrily. The other creature scoffed and smirked.

"**I bet you did,**" the other creature said sarcastically.

"Who is that?" Deathbringer asked, earning an annoyed growl.

"**This is Riot,**" Venom introduces the grey symbiote. He hesitates for a few seconds. "**He's my other son.**"

"**Take Twisted's deal,**" Riot advises. "**Pyrrhia will die either way. You might as well get something for it.**"

And with that note, he leans down then shoots up into the air. The force kicked dirt into Venom's eyes, earning a snarl from the salty symbiote.

"**If you make a joke about my parenting, I'm going to stop your heart again,**" the Klynntarian warned, and Deathbringer bit back his remark. Venom drained back into the bodyguard's black scales. "**Go home. It's getting late.**"

Deathbringer looked up at the sky, and to his surprise, the symbiote was right! He had left just this morning, and hadn't spent more than 15 minutes inside of the base! How could 12 hours have passed in that amount of time?!

"**It's a sub-dimension,**" Venom explained, sensing the nightwing's confusion. "**The passage of time tends to differ between dimensions.**"

Glory's gonna be so pissed, he realized, and the moment he thought of the queen, his thoughts couldn't help but wander back to Twisted's deal. He didn't want to consider it. It was so obviously wrong to even consider sacrificing everyone and everything just to be with the dragon you love!

Especially when she doesn't love you back, the back of his mind taunted him... Moons above, why were his thoughts so loud?

Finally, he reached the palace. The guards at the front greeted him. "Queen Glory's been looking for you all day. Where've you been?"

In a subdimension with an evil fox who has a plan to take over Pyrrhia, Deathbringer had the urge to say, an urge a bit stronger than it

should've been. Fortunately, he was able to hold himself back and come up with a quick answer.

"Out," he said gruffly. I never said it was a *good* answer. As he walked over to her office, his brain swirled more and more. His anxiety grew, and even Deathbringer knew that something was wrong, but Glory took priority over everything; over him, his health, no matter how severe.

By the time he reached the door to Glory's office, he was quaking, but he didn't want to stop. He didn't want to stop until he was near her. So he opened the door, and there she was. The rainwing queen was sitting at her desk doing paperwork. When the nightwing entered, she looked up at him, and pure relief washed over her face.

"Deathbringer!" She exclaimed in relief. After a moment though, that relief turned to anger, and Deathbringer's chest tightened. "I have been looking for you all damn day! You can't just run off like that! What was so important that you had to leave for the whole day without a word?!"

He wanted to tell her. His mind screamed at him, the voice bouncing around his skull and shattering everything in its path. Deathbringer wanted to hug her. He wanted to hold her close and tell her everything he heard that day. He wanted to ask her what to do. He wanted her to help him make a decision that won for everyone because she was amazing and perfect and beautiful and that's what she did!

Slow your role. Venom warned, growing concerned. **Your adrenaline is going through the roof... To be honest you probably *could* go through the roof with that amount of adrenaline.**

But Deathbringer couldn't calm down, he couldn't breathe, he couldn't even think properly. His thoughts were racing and he couldn't keep up with them and he felt so full and yet so empty. He wanted to protect Glory. He wanted to shield her from the creature he just met, and anything he was going to face. He knew he had to but that he couldn't. That he did but was never going to. Everything felt so wrong but so right. He wanted to hug and kiss her but

wanted to hurt her. He wanted to love her and hate her and want her and kill her.

Deathbringer, calm down! Venom demanded, but Deathbringer would not, will not, did not, is not. He wanted to kill everything. He wanted to rip off his own scales and turn them into a knife. Why did everything hurt? Why did it burn?! Why did things have to burn? Why did he feel like his insides were melting? It felt his organs were rotting years at a time inside of his body.

"I'm so sorry," he said finally, and Glory rolled her eyes and grunted in frustration. Everything inside of him was in place but shattered. He felt tears come to his eyes and roll down his face, but when he went to wipe them away there was blood on his talon. He made a strangled noise that was supposed to be gasp, and the queen looked back up at him.

"Deathbringer?!" Glory she exclaimed, her eyes wide. It was only then when the nightwing realized he was peeing uncontrollably onto the floor, but he smiled. He wanted to die, but he smiled.

Then, everything went black. And Deathbringer embraced sweet death.

Exposed

When Deathbringer regained anything resembling consciousness, he hated it instantly. Everything felt hot and loose. Could he go back to being dead?

Welcome back to the world of the living. Venom said smugly, eliciting a quiet groan from the nightwing. **I mean that literally. You were dead for about 3 hours 23 minutes 47 seconds.**

"What happened?" the bodyguard questioned sleepily, trying to pull enough of his strength together to move.

Rogue must have injected some of her toxins without us realizing it, Venom explained. **I was able to combat it, and now here we are.**

Deathbringer looked around to see where he was, and quickly realized he was in the rainwing hospital. He rolled off the bed and stood up, stumbling only slightly before finding his balance.

"So it wasn't a dream?" Deathbringer thought dreadfully. He remembered what happened before he had passed out, and the very idea that it was real... he didn't even want to think about it.

You having a mental breakdown and then peeing on Glory's floor? Venom questioned. **Naaaah, complete work of fiction**.

Deathbringer rolled his eyes. So it *had* been real... "Moons above," he exclaimed quietly. How was he going to talk his way out of this one? Scratch that, how could he even face Glory after what had happened?

You know you can't tell her what really happened, Venom informed him, and Deathbringer jolted up.

"Why not?" the nightwing questioned. Telling her the truth was probably the only way to get out of this mess!

Because you know Glory, the symbiote insisted. **She will try to find a way to stop Twisted, and he will kill her.**

As much as he wanted to disagree, to argue with the Klynntarian and tell him he was wrong, he couldn't. Deep down, Deathbringer knew that he was right. Glory would not stand for injustice in her rainforest, and she would try to stop it. And, though he basically just got here, he knew that Twisted was *far* beyond anyone and anything in Pyrrhia.

"Deathbringer," Glory's called gently, pulling back the curtain. Her face softened when she saw him. "Hey, how are you feeling?"

"I'm so sorry," he blurted. "I didn't mean to. I just... I think I ate something weird, and I couldn't control myself and I felt like I was gonna-"

"It's ok," Glory assured him. "But... I need to know what you did today."

You can't tell her. For her safety.

"I promise I won't kill you whatever you say," she says, then adds, "I never said I won't be mad."

He will kill her.

"I need to tell her," Deathbringer insisted. "Glory, ever since the storm, I've been going through some stuff."

Glory looked at him worriedly. "Tell, me," she insisted.

"I wanted to tell you sooner, but he hasn't let me. He told me that keeping it a secret was in your best interest, but it's getting to be too much to handle." He took a deep breath. This was it. "Glory I've been... I've been infected with something..."

There's still time to turn back!

"I don't know what exactly he is," Deathbringer continued despite Venom's warnings. "But he latched onto me during the storm..."

The nightwing stopped when he saw Glory's face... Why was she looking at him like that? Her face looked as if she was in denial, and her eyes... there was no recognition in them whatsoever. Why? He was still the dragon she trusted with her life all those years ago!

Then, she started backing away! Deathbringer tried to reach for her, but she flinched. **I told you,** Venom said, but he dismissed it.

"I need your help," he said, now desperate. He had been trying to prove Venom wrong, but now he was starting to doubt his choice! "He latched onto me during the storm and now he's inside of me! His name is Venom, and he works with The Nightmares. Today, he brought me to their base to try and win me over but they failed! I'm not going to hurt you."

Glory was frozen at the edge of the room, and Deathbringer could see a million thoughts in her head trying to organize themselves. "A member of the Klyntaar?" she said finally, and both Deathbringer and Venom were surprised.

"H-how did you-?" Deathbringer asked, but Glory cut him off. Now, she seemed less scared and more... hurt.

"And their base... You met with someone from the Nightmares... As in a Class 9 Nightmare Entity?" she questioned. "It was you... all along. You're the host."

"I wanted to tell you sooner!" the nightwing repeated, but he could tell he was fighting a losing battle. "Please, Glory... It's me."

She stood there, trying to act strong, but Deathbringer knew her well enough to see the conflict in her. "Please," he begged. "It's me, Deathbringer. The dragon who abandoned his entire tribe for you. Who sacrificed everything just to be near you."

She stood there for several moments, and Deathbringer waited, and waited for her to answer, for any sign whatsoever! His heart pounded in his chest, even Venom seemed to be tense with anticipation.

And then, after what felt like an eternity, he got an answer.

An Answer and Another Choice

To say the least, it was a lot to take in. If Lefte was to be believed, these Nightmares were supposed to be some kind of terrorists! They were such a threat, that they needed to have control over all of Pyrrhia just to counteract them! And now, Deathbringer was not only telling her that he was a part of these terrorists, but he had been since the storm?! That he had met with their leader without telling her?

But on the other talon, it was *Deathbringer* she was talking about! The idiot who walked into walls regularly. The dragon had given up everything just to be her bodyguard. The dragon who was always there for her, no matter what... He wasn't a terrorist... Was he?

She looked at his face, that face that would make her warm inside whenever he wore that stupid smirk. But now, he wasn't smirking, he was pleading, begging her to see past all of the former...

She opened her mouth to speak but saw the way that he cowered at the very idea of her speaking, and her heart shattered. She closed her snout and rushed over to him, embracing him in a tight hug. "I-I'm sorry," she apologized. What had she been thinking? It was Deathbringer! She had no reason to be afraid of him!

He noticeably relaxed as soon as she hugged him, wrapping his wings around her in return. The nightwing let out a shaky breath, obviously relieved by her choice. In all honesty, so was Glory. After spending years with him, getting so attached... she didn't think she could live without him!

It didn't take long for the moment to be over, however, as 3... creatures entered the room. In the presence of these beings, Deathbringer's entire body tightened. All 3 of them anthropomorphic animals.

One was a black male bear with a yellow star on his chest and a red bowtie; there was a bit of red fur on his cheeks, and he was missing

an eye. The second creature was a red and orange vixen with purple fur on her cheeks and painted claws. The last one was in the center of the group and was an anthropomorphic wolf. His fur was grey, and unlike the others, his fur wasn't accented by bright colors. His left arm looked a bit damaged with small white bits that looked like they could grow into spikes. The thing that stood out the most, though, were his eyes that were a hypnotizing sapphire blue; they radiated a kind of calming energy, and if Glory didn't know any better, she'd say that they glowed.

Deathbringer released her and stepped in front of her defensively. The vixen got into a fighting stance but the wolf put his hand up to stop her. "Don't worry," he said finally. His voice surprised Glory. She had expected it to be deep and powerful, but listening to it now... he sounded like a teen! "We're here to help."

"Who are you?" Glory demanded, and a small smile appeared on the wolf's face.

"Well, you know these two," he said. The bear's missing eye glowed, and to the queen's amazement, red energy swirled around him and the vixen. After a moment, they were replaced by Rogue and Omniverse.

"But my real name is Lefte," Omniverse, or rather, who she thought was Omniverse spoke up.

"W-wha-" Glory tried, but nothing came out. What was this? Animus magic?

"It's not animus magic," Lefte said, turning back into the bear. "it's Mystic Energy."

"We are an elite group of warriors who travel-" the wolf stopped at elite and glared at Rogue, who was snickering. "What? What's so funny."

"The fact you think you're elite," she said, and he rolled his eyes.

"*As I was saying,"* he grumbled, before straightening himself out. "We are an elite group of warriors who travel through the

dimensions fighting the Nightmares. My name is Flint, and I am the leader of this group."

Lefte nudged him, and he seemed to remember something. "Right. I am also the Cawthon."

Deathbringer gasped quietly and took a step back. *Does he know him?* Glory questioned in her mind. She had so many questions! Thoughts swirled in her head uncontrollably, refusing to line up in a coherent train of thought.

"We apologize for the manipulation," Lefte assured her. "We were trying to solve the issue as quickly and quietly as possible, but we realize now we made a mistake."

"Deal with what?!" Glory shouted suddenly, all of her confusion expressing itself in frustration.

"It's what I said before," Rogue explained. "The end of your world."

"You mean Twisted?" Deathbringer spoke up suddenly, and they all nodded.

"He's a class 9 Nightmare entity," Lefte explained. "Class 9 refers to a world-destroyer."

"What makes the Nightmare's so dangerous?" Glory wondered. What could be such a threat that they require interdimensional warriors to intervene? How could something tangible be so dangerous as to be considered a *world-destroyer*?

"You know the stories, right?" Rogue questioned. "Of scavenger's ruling before dragons?"-- the queen nodded-- "What do you think killed them off?"

"The existence of animus magic is due to the Nightmare's tampering with the Mystic Crystal," Lefte added.

"And most Nightmares are genetically engineered to be sociopathic and sadistic. They enjoy inflicting pain and misery," Flint added as well. *Great, just great,* Glory thought. Now, the question was what made *them* able to deal with this threat?

"Why us?" Glory's bodyguard questioned. "What made him choose this dimension?"

"Not sure," Rogue admitted. "We have intel that they're trying to change the timeline to achieve something, which is why they haven't destroyed it yet. Don't ask me what, cause I don't know."

Glory considered this, then looked at Deathbringer, who also looked thoughtful. *Are they after Deathbringer?* she wondered. No, that didn't make much sense. If they wanted Deathbringer, by now, they would have him, wouldn't they? Since they had someone inside of him?

"Deathbringer," Flint says. "Or, rather, Venom. Will you join us?"

There was a silence following, and the queen looked at Deathbringer worryingly. She knew that Deathbringer would say yes. That he would not hesitate to fight for a good cause. But it wasn't up to Deathbringer...

It was up to the Nightmare within him.

Hey everyone, sorry for my inconsistent and very infrequent upload schedule. It's been really hard trying to balance writing with school and my other responsibilities. I promise though, I'm not orphaning this story and will continue to upload as often as possible! Feel free to leave a comment...

Please leave a comment... I'm so lonely.

Forces Combined

As soon as Deathbringer heard the question, his heart fluttered and stopped at the same time. "Please Venom," he pleaded. When the Klyntaarian had attacked Rogue before, he had solidified his alliance with the Nightmare's in Deathbringer's, and probably their mind, too. As soon as he was free, he had gone straight for the kill, without hesitation. "It's the only way to avenge your son."

You can't beat the Nightmares. No one can, Venom said solemnly, and the nightwing's despair quickly vanished, giving way to anger.

"Why won't you even try?!" Deathbringer shouted, forgetting he was in a room with other dragons. "Don't you care?"

OF COURSE, I CARE! Venom shouted. Black tendrils shot up and attached to the ceiling before pulling him up, trapping him against the wood. Everyone else stepped in to intervene, but Deathbringer halted them.

"Then why won't you act like it?!" Deathbringer questioned, refusing to be intimidated by this alien. *He's inside of **my** body,* he growled in his head.

What do you want me to do? Venom questioned. **Rush into battle against a foe I know I can't beat? Are you asking me to die Deathbringer?**

"I'm not asking you to die! I'm just asking you to *TRY!*"

It's pointless anyway! There's nothing we can do!

"Why are you being a coward?!"

BECAUSE I'M SCARED, Venom admitted suddenly. For a moment, the wall that separated the two's emotions thinned, allowing Deathbringer to feel all the pain the klyntaarian was hiding. A long

silence between the two followed. **I'm terrified, Deathbringer. Don't you think I want to fight back? Don't you think I want to avenge my son?**

"You can," Deathbringer assured him gently, but the symbiote only scoffed.

You haven't seen what he's capable of, Venom insisted. **You haven't seen him kill millions with a smile on his face.**

"You're right," Deathbringer admitted. "I haven't. But they have, and now you have them. You're not alone anymore, Venom."

The symbiote was quiet, so the nightwing kept going. "We can do this. Together."

The tendrils extended, lowering Deathbringer safely to the ground, and the nightwing smiled. He'd done it. He'd convinced him, he could feel it. The nightwing looked back up at the group, suddenly remembering their existence. "We're in," Deathbringer informed them, and they all smiled.

At this moment, Deathbringer felt powerful, like he had just proved himself and beyond. He had grown up as an assassin. He talked with his fists and blades... But now, in a situation where all of that was useless, he came through... He... He came through! Maybe he killing wasn't the only thing it was good at...

The moment, however, was over very quickly.

Lefte suddenly gasped and waved his talon to the side, using his power to knock Glory sideways. Mere moments later, a robotic creature slammed through the wall, shoving his blade into the ground where Glory had been standing.

The machine was a huge behemoth resembling a gorilla. It's covered in a dark metal alloy, with spikes down its spine and arms. Its eyes glowed red behind a visor. Small gaps in its thick armor where it was supposedly welded together provided a constant outflow of steam. If that was all Deathbring had to go off of, he would've assumed it was a robot. *But it breathed.* It took deep, heavy breaths,

releasing hot steam from its mouth every time. Not even Venom seemed to know what it was.

Flint, however, didn't hesitate. The fur on his arm stood on end for a moment as if from static as a sphere the same blue of his eyes appeared in his hand. He hurled it at the behemoth, but it only seemed to annoy the creature.

"That's new," he said as the creature charged toward him. It took a swing at the Cawthon, who generated a shield made of the same kind of energy. The shield held strong, but Flint was pushed back a few feet. Lefte immediately intervened, his missing eyes filling with a glowing red sphere as he blasted a red beam at the cyborg.

The creature grunted in pain, but other than that, the energy beam didn't seem to affect the armored behemoth.

"Flint!" Rogue called, and the Cawthon reacted instantly. He dodged another swing from the goliath, diving and flipping toward Rogue, putting his hand onto her shoulder. Energy flowed down his arm into the vixen, whose eyes flashed the same blue as his.

She nodded in appreciation, then immediately jumped into action. Rogue jumped into action, jumping over a swing from the behemoth, jumping off his fist to take his back. The creature roared, reaching his arm back in an attempt to hit her off. At the same time, red ropes materialized around his arms and head, then tightened, pinning them to his head. All the while, Flint came up in front of it, his fist flaming with that blue energy. "Lefte, keep him pinned," he commanded. "Rogue, hack into his robotics to keep him from breaking free. I'll burn through the armor."

Deathbringer could hardly believe their coordination. All Rogue had to do was call his name and he knew exactly what was expected of him! Not even he and his mother were on that level of communication...

"Deathbringer!" Lefte called. His eye was glowing red and his arm was outstretched toward the behemoth, using all of his strength to keep the cyborg from breaking free as Flint shot a constant beam of energy into its chest. "Get Glory out of here! Tell everyone to retreat

to the border of the rainforest!"

Deathbringer was filled with embarrassment. Why had he just been standing there while they were all trying to deal with the threat? *No time to think about that now,* Deathbringer reminded himself. He led Glory out of the hut. On the way, they met multiple doctors and security guards who were questioning what was going on.

"Do not engage," Glory instructed everyone who asked. "Evacuate the hospital to the edge of the forest. Tell anyone you see what's happening."

When they made it out, they immediately bolted back to the palace. Back there, there was an intercom system, allowing Glory to make announcements without having to call a meeting, then waiting for all the dragons to gather.

They raced through the corridor, telling every guard and citizen they encountered to evacuate.

As they rounded the corner to the room where the intercom was stationed, Twisted stood in their path.

Why won't you die?!

It was a mystery to Flint why Cawthon had chosen him to be the next reincarnation. If he wasn't a Cawthon, then he'd just be left in the dust, forgotten. The previous Cawthon's had made huge strides, helped to better billions of lives. They were pure, strong, brave.

What was he?

He was born into a family he didn't get to meet and then captured by the Nightmares. If he wasn't fighting them as the Cawthon, he'd be fighting the Cawthon as a Nightmare. The other Cawthon's had been pure of heart, with valiant friends by their sides. Flint? He had the mark of the enemy branded onto his neck, now hidden under his fur, but far from forgotten.

Even his best friends and teammates were created by the Nightmares and marked as defective. They all struggled with their inner darkness. They couldn't even kill this stupid gorilla! The further he drilled into this thing, the less it seemed to have any effect!

Flint knew that if he used *it*, then this would be far easier. But he refused to become dependant on the Nightmare's curse. *Just a little more,* he told himself, pushing more energy into his beam despite his exhaustion.

To his dread, the ropes binding the creature's arms loosened before tightening again. Flint looked over at Lefte, who had blood slowly falling from his nose. *He's using too much,* the Cawthon realized. *Come on, man. Just a little longer.*

The mystic tried his best, but eventually, his exhaustion overtook him. He dropped to his knees, the ropes vanishing into impotent sparkles. Flint swore he saw a smile behind the creature's mask before steam blasted from his body. Rogue covered her face to protect herself, sacrificing her handhold.

The cyborg roared in and leaped upward, knocking Rogue off as he tore through the ceiling. It wasn't long before it came back down, bringing a metal fist down onto the Cawthon. Flint put a shield, blocking the attack. Without warning, the creature's other fist swung around from under. It slammed into the wolf with a *crack!* as his ribs broke under the pressure

What is this thing?! he wondered as he broke through the wall before crashing to the forest floor. For a few long moments, he laid there, struggling to breath. Then, he felt it. His bones began to shift back into place and heal, as did the organs they damaged.

While before he said that he refused to rely on the curse the Nightmare's had given him, he supposed that wasn't entirely true. In fact, he relied quite heavily on his increased immune system, incredible healing factor, as well as his heightened speed, strength, reflexes and... well, you get the idea.

Once the pain was bearable, he threw himself back up and into the fight. He focused his energy, drawing what he wanted with his hand before grasping it. A long blade resembling a Jiao appeared in his hand, and he ran back into battle.

Meanwhile, Lefte was still sitting in the corner. *Get up,* he told himself. *Fight!* But his body refused to move. Pathetic. He was fighting alongside the person destined to save the spectroverse, and he couldn't even stand! He was a mystic. By his knowledge, the last mystic in the spectroverse. They were created by Cawthon to hold the spectroverse together.

But he wasn't made by Cawthon. He was made by the Nightmares, and he wasn't even go enough for them. *No wonder,* he thought, watching hazily as his friends fought hard while he simply stood by.

That frustration grew in him, and before he knew it, it had transformed into anger. *No,* he said, pushing it down no matter how good it felt to have it. He couldn't give in to the Nightmare's way of gathering energy. It was like a person with a family history of addiction. If he wasn't careful, he could fall into that trap, and who knows where that'd lead him.

But what if it's the only way? the mystic wondered suddenly. Could releasing his anger be the only way to defeat this foe? Flint was the strongest person he knew, and he could barely cause a scratch!

Temptation overwhelmed him. *Maybe... maybe just a little,* he thought, loosening his hold on his anger. It filled him with energy. *Maybe a little more...*

"It'll be hard," Flint's voice rang in his head. "But I know we can do it, together. We may be Nightmares, but we are *not* one of them."

Back then, Rogue had brushed it off as really cheesy, but Lefte had stayed quiet. They had been the only thing keeping him from releasing that pent up rage, from giving in to the same temptation he was feeling now!

He wasn't going to let Flint down.

Strength filled him again, but not from anger. Fueled with determination, he forced his body back under his control. *Focus,* he reminded himself. He knew that physically, there wasn't much he could do. He didn't have enhanced physical attributes like his friends. But maybe he could help in other ways...

He assessed the creature. He knew that whatever the armor was made of was too thick to get past efficiently, especially when it was attacking like this. He needed to find a weak point if they were to have any chance of winning. The most obvious place would be the joints, but the Nightmare's seem to have thought of that; the joints seemed to be all robotic, and made of the same material. The next would be the face, but he saw Flint blast it multiple times, and it hadn't seemed to take any effect.

Come on, he thought. There had to be weak spot on this thing! But it was getting hard to think. Even with the holes in the walls, the steam was starting to--

The steam!

Transmission

This broadcast has been translated and revised from its original form for the viewer's experience.

Attention, T-03,

We have reviewed your request and authorized a further investigation into your case regarding the transmission. Upon inspection, we discovered that you were correct. Based on our findings, the mystic mentioned in the recording is highly unlikely to be M-01. 23 credits have been added to your balance, and 392 were taken to fund the expedition. The intermission was traced back to Universe 373. We are sending you to Control Center [REDACTED], located within the dimension, along with [TRANSLATION ERROR] credits for employees, weapons, extra needed research, etc. You may contact [REDACTED] to request further compensation.

I'm sure I don't have to remind you of the consequences that come with failure.

OBJECTIVE: Find and recruit the mystic. Enslave dimension once completed.

END OF TRANSMISSION.

...

...

Only [TRANSLATION ERROR] credits, huh? Should've known. I can easily double it if I gamble right at Naga's Casino, but that'll still be cutting it close...

Well, then again, if I can sink the titanic, I can get a young mystic.

Confrontation

Glory and Deathbringer stopped right in their tracks, staring at the menacing beast in front of them. The queen squinted at the fox. It looked so... familiar. But for the life of her, she couldn't figure out where she knew him from!

Then, it struck her, and her heart collapsed in her chest. It was the fox from her Nightmares!

"Well, well, well," he treated with an amused look on his face. "It's nice to see you all! How are you doing? I hope you've been burning."

The fox cackled at his own bad joke, which was barely even a joke but seemed to amuse him nonetheless. Deathbringer was frozen solid, knowing that they'd have to fight him if they wanted to have any chance of getting past him; but he also knew that there was *no* way he could win against Twisted.

"You know, I really would've kept my promise," he informed Deathbringer. "if you had helped, I was really going to provide all the services I offered you, without any tricks. But now that you've not only disagreed and made my agent betray me, but you also had to go and join the Cawthon..."

Twisted's smile turned into a snarl, before reverting to his amused smirk. "Now... Now we'll just have to kill you before I go on with my plan... And since Glory's here, I'll have to kill her too!"-- as he added layers to his plan, his speech grew more and more frantic.-- "And since the tribe will notice their queen missing, I'll have to kill them all too! And since a tribe disappearing won't go unnoticed, I'll just have to kill everyone! And it all started with YOU!"

He aimed his hooked hand at the two and Glory came to another startling realization. *The hook,* she thought. *It's the one Thorn gave me! That means... he was in the palace... he was 3 hallways away from where we sleep!*

Deathbringer suddenly pounced into action, fueled by adrenaline. The floor broke underneath him when he pushed off of it, calling on Venom's strength as he flew forward his target. Twisted only smiled and stepped to the side nonchalantly, easily avoiding the attack. As the nightwing flew past, the fox seized his tail and swung him over his head into the ground in front of him.

Glory's bodyguard hit the ground hard enough to not only crack it but to bounce back up. Without missing a beat, Twisted drop kicked Deathbringer, seeing the ex-assassin flying down the hall until he slid to a stop.

"So predictable," the fox sighed. Deathbringer saw Glory open her mouth to spit acid, and before he could tell her to stop, the world-destroyer was on her. He grasped her throat, lifted her off the ground then slamming her back down. He looked the nightwing in the eyes, and his heart gripped. *He wouldn't dare*, he told himself, but he knew that wasn't true.

However, to his relief, the fox didn't kill her. He stood up, with her still in his clutches, then discarded her like trash. The queen was sent through a wall, but it wasn't with enough force to kill her.

"I'm not supposed to tell anyone this," Twisted monologues as he sauntered toward Deathbringer. "But not long ago, we intercepted a transmission. It had obviously been intended for the Cawthons but we found it first! In this transmission, an unidentified speaker told us to find the mystic.'"

Deathbringer growled despite his curiosity and attacked again. However, the result was the same. The nightwing quickly followed it up by sending multiple of Venom's tentacles, hoping to ensnare the Nightmare. Green flames appeared in front of the fox, and pain overtook Deathbringer's body as the symbiote also shrieked in agony. *Fire weakness,* the nightwing remembered.

"Originally, we thought it was Lefte. I mean, who else would it be? But something wasn't sitting right with me. Why would the Cawthon's be told to find the mystic, when he's already with them?"

Deathbringer tried to attack again, but Twisted put a stop to it even

before he stood up, blasting the bodyguard with green flames. They were unnaturally hot and left him feeling sick inside.

"So I ordered an investigation, and sure enough, it wasn't him. My job was to come here, identify who the mystic was, and either recruit or kill them. We were here for a thousand years, Deathbringer."

Before the nightwing could even think of attacking again, the fox kicked him upside the head. His body snapped to follow his head, making his body contort painfully.

"Just when I was about to call off the mission, it happened. The Cawthons find out where I am, and haphazardly open a portal in a rush to escape the agents I sent after them. I look up and what do I see? You getting struck not once, but twice with lightning infused with mystic energy."

Twisted put a foot onto Deathbringer's head, pressing it into the floor. "Then, weeks later, Venom says that you somehow remembered events that happened in a reset."

"Why are you telling me this?" Deathbringer questioned. The fox grinned sinisterly, pressing his head harder into the ground.

"You're a mystic, Deathbringer. And, well, since you didn't join, I have orders to destroy you."

The nightwing roared and struggled, but despite Venom's strength, was powerless under the world destroyer's grasp. Then, as if in hesitation, Twisted's foot lifted just enough. Deathbringer knocked the fox back then threw himself away from him, scrambling to his feet.

"But here's the kicker!" the fox growled, his grin spreading wider and wider. "I'm not going to kill you!... He is."

On cue, Deathbringer heard a thump behind him. Before he could turn to see who it was, he was knocked away by a red tentacle, seemingly from a symbiote. A much more powerful symbiote. The hit knocked him through the palace wall. Venom reacted quick

enough, taking over Deathbringer and landing on their feet. Their attacker roared. Though, it could barely be described as a roar so much as a high-pitched screech. Finally, the other symbiote showed itself, and Deathbringer's blood ran cold.

It shouldn't have, because the nightwing had no idea who this red klyntaarian was. But Venom did. His shock was so great, it overwhelmed the symbiote, allowing it to flood into Deathbringer's body.

"**My boy...**"

My Boy...

"**Impossible,**" Venom exclaimed quietly, refusing to believe what he was seeing. He saw it. He *saw* it. He **saw** it! He saw his son burn up. He saw as the thing he created suddenly burst into flames with a scream. He saw the look of betrayal in Carnage's eyes as he was consumed by the flames.

And yet, there he was in front of him. Those traces of black on his otherwise red body a mark of his lineage as he stalked toward them a maniacal smile.

"What a happy family reunion!" Twisted mused, but the symbiote could hardly listen. He was nigh mesmerized by his son's supposed revival.

"**Carnage,**" he said softly, taking a step towards his child. "**I-its me.**"

Carnage's eyes turned soft, and Venom smiled. "**It's daddy,**" he said, reaching to touch his son for the first time in years. Of course, it was his son, he would never--

It all happened in a blur. Carnage grabbed Venom's hand and pulled the symbiote towards himself as if for a hug. The red klyntaarian's hand suddenly morphed into a blade and he quickly thrust it into his father's stomach. Without missing a beat, Carnage whipped around, ripping his hand out from the side; his other hand morphed into a similar sword, and he brought it down onto Venom's neck.

Fortunately, the symbiote's shock allowed Deathbringer to take control, and the nightwing jumped out of the way, narrowly avoiding decapitation. What he couldn't avoid, however, was when Carnage dashed toward him with a deranged grin. The bodyguard barely had time to block before he was hit with enough force to send him flying back.

Deathbringer ricocheted off of a tree trunk, rolling to a stop on the

forest floor. However, he barely had any time to rest. He rolled out of the way moments before Carnage slammed down, cracking the ground underneath him. The ex-assassin rolled to his feet and managed to find an opening, punching with all of his might, but his fist was stopped inches from Carnage's face.

"Venom..." Deathbringer cursed as the red symbiote recovered and sent him flying back once again.

"That's not your son anymore!" the nightwing tried to convince Venom, but the black klyntaarian refused. Surely his son hadn't meant it! The Carnage he knew was too sweet for his own good! He shared his rations with those who wanted it, he fought an impossible battle because he wanted others to be happy!

Carnage came at them again and again, faster and stronger than the two heroes. He ran circles around them, seemingly attacking from all angles at once!

"You know you can't win, right?" Twisted questioned as Deathbringer was knocked down once again. "Klynntaarians grows stronger every generation. Not only is Carnage Venom's son, automatically giving him the advantage; but he's not holding back."

"What did you do to him?!" Venom demanded as Carnage trapped him, pressing his father's head into the dirt.

"I did what you failed to do," the fox replied simply. "I saved him."

"LIES!" Venom roared. **"I SAW HIM DIE!"**

Twisted cackled, coming down to meet Venom. "That's very true. You *did* see him die, but let me tell you a little story. Due to your pathetic choice of a first host, Carnage turned out just that, pathetic. He was barely even a Nightmare! However, while he lacked the mentality of a Nightmare, physically, he was by far superior to all of your children! After it was all said and done, one of the guards just so happened to find a small red splotch. We took it, and from it, we grew a clone. Now, with a competent host, he's the Nightmare he was *meant* to be."

"**Aren't you proud, papa?**" Carnage teased. Deathbringer looked to Venom for guidance, but the symbiote was shocked into dormancy. The nightwing was on his own... and he had no idea what he was going to do. It suddenly occurred to him that, with no way out, it was very possible he would die here. He roared and began thrashing in a futile attempt to preserve his own life, but it was pointless. He was trapped under Carnage, and he was going to die...

Some flew in the air from the horizon and landed on Carnage in a huge globe. There was a violent hissing sound, and the red klyntaarian let out a high-pitched screamed of pain and stumbled back, letting go of Deathbringer in his agony. The bodyguard spun around and kicked Carnage into the forest. He turned back around just in time to see him lunge at Glory.

The nightwing jumped with all his might, colliding with the fox mid-air. Twisted spun around mid-air and threw Deathbringer to the ground before landing on his feet. His arm became engulfed in flames.

"I told you," he growled. "You can't beat me."

"Maybe not," Deathbringer admitted. "But I can keep you here as long as I can."

A wicked grin spread across Twisted's face. "You know, I was once like you," he said, but the nightwing didn't care for another monologue. He lunged at the world-destroyer, but he dodged out the way, grabbed his tail, and swung him into a tree before stamping down on his neck. "Naive, emotional... weak."

Deathbringer roared and threw his foot off of him, rolling up and lunging again. With unmatched speed, the fox spun around brought the heel of his foot into the nightwing's jaw; the bodyguard's body snapped to follow the head as he tumbled to the floor.

"Now, you may be wondering," Twisted continued to Deathbringer's annoyance. "How did I go from being a beta male cuck like you to the absolute *chad* I am now? Well, it was a kind of... assisted revelation..."

Deathbringer ripped a tree from the ground and threw it at the fox, who reduced it to ash within seconds with his green flames. The energy extended beyond the tree, scorching the nightwing's scales with unnatural power.

"I was captured by the Nightmares," he went on, not waiting for Deathbringer to stand before he kicked the queen's guard in the head. "They didn't want me, so they ran an experimental procedure. Most put through it had died, right, but they had nothing to lose... And I *survived.* Infused with such power, it took a toll on my mind. I tried to fight it, I tried to resist. And that's where the 'assisted revelation' came in."

He picked the nightwing up, then slowly began to galge his eyes out. Deathbringer screamed in agony, writhing and struggling. "Killing is *fun,* and mercy is a weakness. Why try to resist when it felt so ***good?*** You must have felt it, right? That rush when you first killed under Venom's control? Even before that, when you killed your targets."

The queen's guard just continued to scream and struggle against the fox's grasp until he pulled his hook out, allowing his eyes to heal. "You're a monster," Deathbringer growled.

"Yes, yes I am," he said with a sinister grin. His hook burst into flames and he reared it back, ready to strike.

"Dragons of the kingdom," Glory's voice spoke over the intercom. "We are under attack. Evacuate completely to the edge of the rainforest toward Jade Mountain, immediately. Only take what you need, get out as quickly as possible!"

"Well, I'll be damned!" Twisted mused, throwing Deathbringer to the floor. The fox ranted about something, but Deathbringer wasn't listening. Even with his healing factor, he was in so much pain.

When I saw him... I really thought that... that maybe I had a second chance... Venom admitted sadly.

"You do," Deathbringer whispered. "Just not with the Nightmares. With us. I was given a second chance with Glory, and I think you

were given one with me. We were given a second chance, now let's take it!"

Venom was silent for several long moments. **You know we can't beat him, right?** he questioned. Deathbringer confirmed. **Alright then... Let's kick his ass.**

The Nightmare Within

Glory rushed into the forest as all of the dragons overhead flew in the opposite direction. Honestly, she should probably follow them; they were heading *away* from the danger. But Glory? She was heading toward her own doom, and unlike Deathbringer, she didn't have a superpowered alien inside of her. Furthermore, she was a substitute dragonet of destiny in a *fake* prophecy!

And yet, even with all of this in mind, she couldn't bring her legs to stop. All she knew was that Deathbringer was in trouble, and by the moons and the stars, she was going to do something about it!

And then Carnage dropped from the trees and slid in front of her, staring at Glory with crazed eyes. He spun around, swinging a bladed hand at the queen. She lept over his weapon and ran further into the forest. She couldn't fight him, she knew that, but she should've also known that she couldn't escape him.

One of his tentacles shot out and latched onto her foot, tripping her and pulling her towards him. She turned, prepared to hose him down with acid, but another tendril darted toward her and clamped her mouth shut.

"**Not this time,**" he growled at her with a smirk. The red liquid slowly enveloped Glory like a cacoon, leaving just her head uncovered.

"Why are you doing this?!" the queen demanded, hoping she could get out of this with her words, or at the very least buy herself some time.

"**I have orders,**" Carnage said simply. "**Of course... I *do* love to get... *Creative* at times...**"

Glory felt something within the cacoon emerge, slowly point themselves into her body. She struggled and fought, only managing to stab herself deeper.

"You don't have to do this!" the queen told him, trying and failing to keep her heart from racing. "There's still time to turn this around!"

Carnage let out a high-pitched cackle, all the while the spikes within his trap grew longer, penetrating her scales. "**And what would I do then?**" he mused.

"Live peacefully at a citizen of Pyrrhia," she assured him, working to keep the desperation from her voice. "Y-you don't have to be the bad guy..."

Again, the red klynntaarian cackled. "**I like being bad,**" he assured her with a deranged grin. "**It makes me happy...**"

The spikes pressed themselves deeper and deeper into Glory, making her scream in pain. Was this how she went out? She recalled a book she read a while back. Back in the day, if dragons didn't like a queen, they'd work together to overthrow her. If the queen was really bad, there was a kind of trap very similar to this one that they would put them in. A kind of coffin which, when closed, would stab the queen with a thousand tiny needles, torturing her until she bled out. In the back of her mind, she couldn't help but appreciate the irony of being the first queen of two tribes, arguably the biggest step forward Pyrrhia had gotten recently, and she was going to die like a tyrant from hundreds of years ago...

A warm feeling washed over her, and a howl of pain ripped through the air. The cacoon vanished and she dropped to the floor. "Queen Glory!" a loud, booming voice rang. *I know that voice!* her mind sang, and sure enough, when she opened her eyes, Whisper was standing there.

But how did he beat Carnage?! she wondered, looking around and searching for the symbiote. She found him screaming, desperately trying to beat away the flame that had grown near him. *He's afraid of fire,* she realized, a flicker of hope rising again.

"You're majesty!" he exclaimed, staring wide-eyed at the queen. A million tiny holes littered her flank, bleeding.

"I'm fine!" she assured him. *I'll get a healer later.* "Hit him again! Keep blasting him with your fire!"

He opened his mouth to speak but was silenced when Carnage growled triumphantly, the fire around him all stamped out. Whisper took a deep breath, then blew a long plume of flame. Carnage was once again, sent into a fit, before turning and taking off.

"Go evacuate with the others!" she told Whisper.

"Your majesty, you have to evacuate too!" he insisted.

"I must find Deathbringer!" she said, turning to take off. He grabbed her shoulder. "Don't try and stop me."

"Stop you? I'm coming with you!" he assured her with a smile, and then they were off.

~~~~~~

Deathbringer didn't know what had led him to believe that he should fight Twisted.

It was **painfully** clear to Deathbringer that the thing he was fighting was indeed just that, a *thing*. This was not a creature, it was a creation, made for the specific purpose of beating the crap out of whoever was foolish enough to believe they could it. And it served its purpose well.

The fox ran circles around the nightwing. Deathbringer faintly noticed that now, some of his body parts littered the ground. Venom had been able to regenerate them in an instant, but Deathbringer had forgotten that even though those limbs were returned to him, they didn't *actually* return to him.

Twisted's green flames made so that Venom couldn't fully take the wheel, so it was up to Deathbringer to fight with the symbiote's increased speed and strength. And when Deathbringer was grabbed by the throat and slammed through a tree, he was reminded that it wasn't increased nearly enough.

"What's wrong, Deathbringer?" Twisted taunted. "You look tired."
~~~~~~

With a growl of determination, the nightwing forced himself off of the ground, glaring up at the *thing's* amused grin. "I can do this all day," he assured the fox, spitting out blood. The fox scoffed.

"You know, you remind me of the old me," he said, his amused smile turning to a distasteful frown. "Naive. Weak. But so convinced that you're strong."

Too fast to counter, Twisted grabbed Deathbringer, slammed him to the floor then rag-dolled him into a tree with a kick. Then, before he could fall, he closes in and punched him through the trunk. "You can't beat me, but you still try. That's not bravery, that's stupidity."

The nightwing growled and once again tried to stand, his legs shaking slightly in exhaustion. With the rate he had been regenerating, he knew that Venom would probably run out of the material he was regenerating with fairly soon. But, they both had gone into this battle knowing they might not come out. So, he stood back up and crouched down into a fighting stance once again.

"Wow..." Twisted sighed with a slight chuckle. "You know you're not saving anyone right? Even if you die here, my invasion will continue. There's no point in fighting."

Once again, the fox sped toward him. Deathbringer threw himself to the right, avoiding his first attack, then bouncing off the ground to lunge at him. Without missing a beat, he extended his leg, kicking the nightwing with surprising force and knocking him back. Deathbringer bounced off the ground and onto his feet again, only to be grabbed and shoved against another tree.

"Do you know how I got my name?" he questioned with a grin. The green flames emerged once again, extending from his hands and condensing to form a blade. "It's a trigger word, that I use to unleash my full power. When I use it, there will be no stopping me. And I'm going to use that power to kill everyone you know, and everyone you don't; everyone you love, and everyone you hate! Do you know why?"

A wicked grin spread across his face, and once again Deathbringer saw the complete insanity in his eyes.

"Because I'm just a little bit-!" before Twisted could finish, he suddenly roared in pain and threw Deathbringer to the side. Glory was standing there, mouth open, fangs extended; she was standing next to Whisper, who was staring at the fox with wide-eyed wonder.

What are they doing here?! Venom questioned. Twisted suddenly turned and charged at the queen, covered in flames. Deathbringer lunged at him but was knocked to the side like a fly. To his terror, Whisper was the next to attack.

"BUG!" Twisted roared as his fist shot forward, tearing through Whisper's chest like paper. Blood and shattered bone sprayed, staining the trees and grass with his friend's carnage. Deathbringer heard someone scream, and it took a while before he realized it was himself.

Despair filled the nightwing. And he wanted to just collapse to the floor and roll up into a ball. He had never wanted this to happen. He thought that fighting Twisted would save lives, not kill his best friend. He remembered all the times that Whisper had been there for him, to comfort him, patch up his wounds, give him advice...

Then, with another deranged smile, the fox turned to Glory and raised a bloody fist.

It was at that moment that something happened. Grief, depression, despair, anger, guilt, were all things that he felt until that very moment when they all washed away and were converted into rage.

~~~~~~

Glory could only watch as Whisper's chest exploded from the force of Twisted's punch, spraying his inside across the forest as well as her scales. Why had she let him come with her? She knew it was going to be dangerous! She *knew* that there was a possibility that she wouldn't come from this... a good queen wouldn't have made that choice...

But she didn't have much time to think about it. All thoughts were removed from her mind as Twisted's fist flew toward her. In the mental silence that followed, a single thought filled her entire
~~~~~~

consciousness.

DEATH.

There was no dodging, no counterattacking. Trying to do so would the equivalent of trying to stop a supernova. If she'd had the time, she would've started crying, but his fist was moving too fast.

And then it stopped.

Even Twisted seemed to be confused by this. A black substance had appeared around his forearm. *Venom!* Glory thought. The fox snarled, his arm flaring with those lime flames of his, but the substance persisted.

The rainwing queen realized that the material around his arm wasn't *material* at all. It seemed like some kind of energy. Both of them looked back, their eyes widening. Deathbringer was standing there, surrounded by that black energy. His entire being radiated rage and pain.

The thing that used to be Deathbringer looked up at them, his eyes glowing a bright red. They stared at the fox with pure hatred and hostile intent. But surprisingly, the most disturbing thing about him was his smile.

Glory had always loved Deathbringer's smile. It made her feel warm and put her at ease. But not this... this was different. This smile was like Twisted's, cold, dead, and evil.

"I'm going to tear you apart!" he roared.

He was a man of his word.

Rip And Tear

Lefte's heart fluttered at the realization, giving him the strength he needed to finally stand and join the fight. For the steam to escape, there must be gaps in the armor for it to travel through! And of course, armor so thick and heat-resistant would be extremely difficult to weld together! They must have taken shortcuts!

He watched Flint parry a blow and slice at the joints of the beast. A smart strategy, but it seemed like those parts too had been mostly covered, which would explain its slow and rigid movements!

He caught glimpses of Rogue too, slashing the same spot over and over, trying to make a dent in the armor.

"Rogue! Flint!" he called, and they both looked to him. At times like this, when he felt weak in comparison, he always forgot how much they trusted him. "Attack the spot where the steam escapes from the armor!"

They both seemed confused at first, and Lefte thought for a moment that they might ignore him. However, they figured it out quickly and went to work. They could defeat him!

They could win!

~~~~~~

Buried deep, deep in the bottom of Twisted's subconscious-- so deep in fact, that not even he could remember it-- there was a tiny sliver of who he used to be. Sometimes it came to him in glimpses. Icecream with a friend. His closest friend pranking him relentlessly. A kind woman. 2 beautiful children...

This was one of those times. As Deathbringer rocketed toward him, then punched him. He thought he might've lost consciousness for just a second, or perhaps his eye had simply exploded from the
~~~~~~

force; whichever the case, the next thing he knew, he was flying through the forest. He spun around mid-air and landed.

"Wow..." he breathed. In all honesty, that was *not* something he was expecting. He looked up, and in an instant, the nightwing's fist was directly in front of him. The fox ducked out of the way, turning to face him, but was surprised to see that Deathbringer had already managed to turn around, his tail speeding toward him. *How is he so fast?* Twisted questioned as he weaved to avoid the attack.

Then, he saw it. In a flash of red, he teleported, and Twisted saw the next blow coming from the corner of his eye.

The moment the fox had seen the black energy, he had recognized it as Nightmare Energy. Of course! All of that grief and anger from his past would've already made him a prime candidate! However... the red energy...

He should've known earlier! He should've known that this would happen. He was blinded by his confidence... no, his plan wouldn't stop here... but still...

How was he supposed to defeat a mystic?

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Deathbringer couldn't stop smiling. In his mind, Venom was shouting at him, but he didn't listen, he didn't *need* Venom anymore! All he needed was this feeling! This awful, horrible feeling that felt so good! There was no doubt in his mind that this was the worst he had ever felt in his life, and he never wanted it to end.

In fact, he didn't even need Glory! He just needed more of this feeling! He just needed more to fight! More to kill! *I'll destroy the whole world,* he thought, his grin growing even wider. He shouldn't have known how to use this power, it was so sudden and foreign to him; but it didn't even feel like he was doing it! It felt like he had just let go of control, and someone else was just doing his bidding.

He finally managed to pin Twisted to the floor. With a lash of his
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

tail, the fox's legs and arms were no more. He stared at the supposed world-destroyer beneath him, and his smile grew ever wider, small seams tearing in his cheeks to allow for the sadistic grin. "***You killed him,"*** Deathbringer said darkly, though his smile didn't fade. "***You tried to kill her... so now... I'm going to rip you to pieces!"***

With a roar, Deathbringer slammed his fist into the ground, his attack narrowly avoided by the fox. The nightwing winced as his bone partially emerged from the back of his elbow as his skin was forced off of the bone by the force. But he didn't care. His smile returned, and he raised his other fist. However, it turned out about the same as last time, with Twisted moving his head in the knick of time and Deathbringer with another broken hand.

I was foolish, he thought in this crazed state. All those years ago... he should've fought like this! Ripped them all to pieces! Then, he wouldn't have to feel this terrible! ... *No... Even before that!*

He remembered his mother, how he had done *nothing* when he knew she would die... if he had fought all the way back then, he would be happy now... it was all his fault... all because he was too cowardly...

No... even with all that... somehow... **"It's still your fault!"** he leaned down roared in the fox's face. This was it... as soon as his hand healed, he was going to rip him apart... tear him into little tiny pieces... and then devour him!

"Yesssssss," he thought, his eyes rolling back into his head like the pure thought of his own wrath filled him with ecstasy. Claws suddenly grasped his throat, and he turned back into reality just in time to see those lime flames run up Twisted's arms, which had healed without him noticing. They covered his entire body, and the nightwing screamed in pain as his scales were burned off and he was blasted back.

He landed with a thud, but he bounced back quickly. Twisted was now standing, his entire body engulfed in that green fire. That amused grin was no longer on his face. Deathbringer paid no mind to this, however. *It doesn't matter... Not when I feel like this...*

He didn't know that with this new level of flames, so too did a new level of speed and strength. Twisted dodged his attack, then brought his elbow down onto the nightwing's spine. Deathbringer bounced off the ground, managing to block the next attack with his wing. Then, he felt his bottom jaw be torn from him as Twisted punched through it. His teeth ground against the arm as he slid up, closing the distance and punching the fox in the gut.

Twisted was blasted against a tree, and Deathbringer wasted no time, flying into and embedding his hand in the tree as the fox *once again* dodged his attack. He looked to the right and was killed.

The Death of Deathbringer

All in all, Glory guessed the whole battle took place in a little over a minute. They both moved so fast that she could barely make them out, just blurs in the trees that occasionally clashed together. The only time she saw them was when the tiny pauses between attacks. When Deathbringer has pinned twisted, and the very end, when her bodyguard was standing against the tree.

It happened so fast the queen hadn't even registered it until a few seconds later. He had been up against the tree, Twisted had thrown a kick, and suddenly the dragon she'd known for years didn't have ahead.

His body flopped against the tree, slowly sliding to the ground. A shrill scream escaped her as the fox stood there, panting over his work. "Well... that sure was unexpected..." he admitted with a chuckle, his flames dying down. Glory took a step back, and suddenly he was directly in front of her, firey sword raised above his head.

The sound of energy clashing filled her ears and Twisted stumbled back, grimacing. Flint was standing right next to her, holding a sword made of blue energy. The fox recovered quickly but was immediately blasted by a red beam.

The queen didn't know what possessed her at the moment, but she suddenly sprinted past Twisted, out of the protection of Flint and over to Deathbringer's corpse. She collapsed next to the headless corpse, tears spilling from her eyes.

Memories flashed in her mind. Deathbringer strutting proudly through the halls with face paint that Glory and her friends had tried to embarrass him with, but had ended up with Glory being the embarrassed one. She remembered the time where Deathbringer had ended up drunk, stumbling through the palace walls like a newborn dragonet. She even thought back to all those years ago, when they had first met...

"You are, without a doubt, the worst assassin I've ever heard of," Glory had said. However, Deathbringer hadn't been bothered by this; he had simply smirked.

"But you *have* heard of me," he had said, making her roll her eyes. That was a simpler time... She'd never thought she'd be saying that about the war of sandwing succession, but it was true!

No queenly duties. No managing two tribes at once. No Darkstalker. No boring politics...

This wasn't the first time she had thought about this. Countless times in the past few years, she had found herself thinking about what it would be like if she hadn't even gotten involved in the war in the first place, or if she hadn't even been involved in the prophecy in the first place. However, she had always dismissed the idea.

If that had happened, she wouldn't have her friends, she wouldn't have saved the nightwings!

She wouldn't have Deathbringer...

In all those times where she felt like she couldn't do it; like it was too much for her... he had always been there. All the times when she felt like she would explode in anger, he had always been there...

And in his greatest time of need, she had been there... but she couldn't do anything... Why? Why was she so powerless to help anyone? She could barely help herself...

"Venom," she called suddenly to Deathbringer's corpse. "Come out you coward, I know you're in there."

The black liquid seeped from the hole that was Deathbringer's neck in a manner that would've made Glory vomit had she not been so angry and determined. "Bond with me," she demanded. "I don't care if I'm not compatible. I'm going to kill this son of a bitch."

The liquid looked up at her as if hesitantly, then shot toward her. The queen gasped as the cold substance latched onto each of her nerves, working its way into her brain. It consumed her, taking over

her brain painful retches.

"**I tried to warn him,**" Venom's promise echoed in her head.

"I'm going to kill him," she told Venom, and he silently agreed.

"**I should tell you... You are not compatible... if I spend too long in you, you will die,**" Venom said, but Glory didn't even flinch.

"I don't care," she growled. "He killed my Deathy..."

FIGHT!

He didn't know why, but as Twisted smiled grimly feeling the bones in the Cawthon's face break under his punch, he found his mind drifting.

It was not the first time this happened, and it undoubtedly would not be the last. However, when he was idle, they usually happened when he had nothing to do but think of it; the time before he was Twisted.

It came to him in glimpses sometimes. Sometimes in short scenes. Even after all these years, he was still fighting to break free from himself.

"Daddy!" a little girl called. The voice pierced through the silence in his mind, almost startling him. "Look what I made for you!"

The drawing the little girl, who really only came to him as a shadow now, had made for him was crude, nothing but stick figures and scribbled colors. But... somehow... it still invoked emotion in him, causing that little spark of who he used to be to burst into a flame before being extinguished.

No, he forced himself out of his own head and shoved that memory into the depths of hell. That was when he was weak, when he was helpless! When he was bullied for not being good enough... but now? That was him no more!

He was Twisted! He was insanity!

He was the end of the world.

Something lept at him from the corner of his eye. He turned to intercept it, but it reached him first, knocking him off his feet. He pushed the ground away from him, flipping and landing on his feet. *Venom...* the symbiote stood there, between the Cawthon and mystic.

Twisted's head snapped to the side to see Deathbringer's corpse still standing there, and grinned as the realization dawned on him. "Glory," he realized instantly, laughing. "You really think that you stand a better chance than Deathbringer? You and Venom aren't even compatible!"

However, they ignored him, lunging toward the fox.

But he was ready this time.

He allowed all of those memories to flow through him, that pain, that suffering, that anger, and let it overcome him. He pushed it out, and his twisted energy shot from his hands, scorching the Klytaarian off of the rainwing before he caught her by her throat.

She dug her claws into his arm, not stopping even when she reached the bone. Twisted roared and threw her back, charging at her as soon as he healed. A red blade shot down, severing Twisted's arm and stopping his attack before he lept back to avoid the others. The mystic, *Righty or something,* Twisted remembered, stood next to the queen, his eye glowing. The bear scooped his hand downward, then pulled it up while the other shot a beam of energy. The fox blocked the beam but was surprised by the ground shifting and morphing. The earth shot up and clasped around his legs before solidifying, trapping Twisted for a moment. A moment was all he needed.

The mystic brought both hands up, then shot them down, raining red arrows onto the trapped world-destroyer. The fox summoned a shield blocking the attack, but was quickly overwhelmed as the Cawthon joined in, blue spears impaling Twisted from all sides. His shield fell, and soon the red arrows joined the spears.

And yet, even with all of these things impaling into him, he still couldn't say that this was the worst pain he'd ever felt. In fact, he'd rather go through this a million times than be at *his* mercy again. Twisted hadn't always been a member of the Nightmares. In fact, quite the opposite. When he first became this monster, he fought against them, seeking revenge for what they'd turned him into.

And he was good at it, too. He made it quite far until he showed up;

or rather, sent out one of his avatars. And yet, even despite not being there in person, that power was still enough to bring the fox to his knees.

It was funny, really. Twisted was an agent of chaos, he struck fear into all and listened to no one... and yet, it was fear that kept him in line.

However, he should really be thanking him. Since, after enduring such complete agony, he was basically unphased by most other sensations.

That was how he found the strength to use that pain, and roar, shooting green flames in every direction, disintegrating the spears, and freeing him. He roared again in rage as he launched a column of energy as big as himself toward his enemies.

When the dust settled, he was the only one standing. He walked toward his former opponents, who he was sure were still alive. *You better be,* he thought to himself. His wish came true as Glory coughed. His eyes narrowed at her, and he stalked toward her. A victorious grin erupted on his face.

"You idiot," he mocked, seizing her by the horn and lifting her off the ground. "You really thought you could win?"

Glory opened her eyes, and he realized that she was crying. *Amazing,* he thought, staring into her teary eyes. "You're not afraid," he realized, his smile widening. "You're so angry, just as angry as *he* was and yet... nothing is happening, is it?"

She snarled at him, and he chuckled. "You're trying to do it, aren't you?" he questioned, and she faltered. "You're trying to become powerful as he did."

"You're a monster," she spat. But he only smiled wider!

"Yes," he agreed. "And you're weak and stupid."

"You don't know anything about me!" she growled.

"I know everything about you!" he insisted, pulling her close to his

face. "I've been watching you for a while now, Glory. You try so hard to act like your strong, like you've got everything handled! But the truth is, that you don't! On the inside, your still the weak little substitute dragonet. Why did you think you could ever defeat me when you weren't even good enough for a fake prophecy?"

Glory growled but looked down. *I've won,* he thought. Her resistance was broken, and soon, everyone else's would be too.

"That may be true," she growled. He couldn't help but furrow his brow in confusion. She was broken, wasn't she? "But I still have something you don't!"

His amused smirk returned. She *was* broken, he was sure of it. There's no reason she shouldn't be! She'd been through too much in one day, there no way she still has fight left in her! "And what's that?" he challenged. She looked up at him, her eyes determined.

"I have friends and family who love me," she growled, and he laughed heartily. Was that really what she was going with? The power of friendship?

"You really-" he started, but was stopped as he looked back at Glory. Venom had taken over her head, their mouth agape. Acid sprayed like a hose, drenching Twisted and going down his mouth.

"And magical death spit!" she roared, kicking him away. Twisted screamed in pain, the acid rendering any attempt to regenerate futile. But, he did not die, only looked at Glory, his eyes flaming. The queen spread her wings and bolted into the air. She dodged and weaved to avoid the balls of flames that Twisted shot at her. However, luck was not on her side. One of the attacks struck her wing, scorching it and eliciting a yelp of pain.

The rainwing crashed to the floor, her wing stinging with pain. She couldn't fly...

So she ran.

Her confidence from earlier had left her, and now, she was running through the forest as fast as her legs would take her, knowing that if

she stopped for just a second, Twisted would catch her. She silently pleaded for someone to help her as she ran, unable to fly. Sometimes, she dared to jump into the air and try, but her injured wing would flare up and she'd crash back down to earth again.

Please... she thought desperately, wishing someone, anyone would come to help her. But she was alone, and her prayers went unanswered. Heat blazed across her backside, and the ground she was standing on exploded. She shouted as she was thrown into the air before tumbling to the ground.

She cried out in pain as she rolled across the forest floor, before landing against something cold. She wailed as she saw Deathbringer's corpse next to her. All of her adrenaline was wiped away in an instant, and she curled up next to him as Twisted emerged, his flaming eyes bearing into her soul, into her mind, corrupting it, breaking it.

"Deathbringer," she pleaded helplessly. "Please come back... I need you..."

I Can Hear A Heartbeat...

In an instant, all of that rage and pain disappeared, and Deathbringer was left floating in a familiar black void. Except, this time, there was no Venom to save him, this time, he was there for good.

"Deathbringer..." a voice he never thought he'd hear again spoke, and when he turned, there she was. Quickstrike was standing there, tears in her eyes, a warm smile on her face. The rightwing froze in his tracks. Was this real?

He didn't care. As soon as his mother opened her wings, he bounded into her embrace. "Mommy..." he sobbed, holding onto her for dear life. Even after all these years, after all, he's been through, he was still just an overgrown dragonet.

"I'm so proud of you," she told him, and his heart exploded. For as long as he had been alive on Pyrrhia, he had prayed that one day he'd hear his mother say those words. It was all he ever hoped and dreamed for... and now... now he'd done it. He'd made his mother proud. "Come on... it's time to go..."

The nightwing nodded, a large door opened in the distance revealing a bright light. Tails twined, they began slowly walking toward it together.

"Deathbringer..." a voice echoed, and he stopped and turned around.

"Glory?" he called, his voice echoing in the nothingness.

"Come on, Deathbringer," Quickstrike urged, and he hesitantly began following her again.

"Please come back," Glory's voice echoed softly. Again, he stopped and turned around walking away from the light. "I need you..."

His mother looked at him, and her face fell. "Son..." she said softly.

"I'm sorry," he told her. "But... I... I need to go back..."

Quickstrike sighed, tears reforming in her eyes. "You've done enough," she assured him. "Come on... I've waited so long..."

"So have I..." he told her. "And... I want to, I really do but mother... I'm needed out there... Will you... will you wait for me just a little longer?"

He braced himself. She was going yell at him, tell him he was a traitor, a coward. But she only smiled.

"I love you too much not to..." she said. "Now... go... do what you must..."

She took one last glance at him and then disappeared with the light. Now, there was only one place Deathbringer *could* go.

Into the darkness...

~~~~~~~

Glory sat helplessly, tucking Deathbringer's lifeless wing over her as if it would protect her. Twisted walked toward her, a long, enflamed blade generating from his hand. She felt Venom retreat from her body, back into Deathbringer's, and couldn't but curse him under her breath.

Twisted raised his sword, and she closed her eyes. There was a bright flash of red, and she braced herself. But the impact never came. Hesitantly, she looked, and she couldn't believe what she was seeing.

Twisted's blade had been blocked by a red outline of a dragon. The dragon suddenly blasted the fox back with an energy wave. Then, it looked to Glory. "Did you miss me?" Deathbringer asked with a familiar smirk. The queen's eyes widened, tears falling down her face.

"Deathbringer!" she exclaimed, jumping up to hug him, but she
~~~~~~~

passed right through his spiritual form. Her heart sunk for a moment, but she quickly got over it. It was him! He was back!

"Now..." he said as Twisted roared from a distance. She felt Venom reconnect with her. "Let's finish what we started..."

~~~~

This was bad. Very very bad.

Twisted knew the Cawthon and the mystic had come to their senses by now, and he knew that he couldn't possibly take on two mystics, a Cawthon, and Venom. He was powerful, but this was an impossible situation to get out of.

Don't use it, he thought after catching himself staring at his wrist. *Not yet...*

Using that ability now would jeopardize this entire mission. He had already done that by killing Deathbringer, but now the plan was back on! He had to be very careful about his next move... He had waited far too long for it to all go to hell now... There was only one problem...

He had no idea where to go from here.

The battle was the single most destructive fight in the history of Pyrrhia, to say the very least. Green flames engulfed entire acres of the forest. Craters and cracks were carved into the earth with every punch. It was a 4 v 1, and Twisted was holding his own... although poorly...

He ducked and jumped and weaved through the attacks, but there were too many. He stood his ground suddenly, summoning his rage into another column of flame. But this time, they were ready for it, Flint putting up a shield to protect the group.

Then, it was 5 v 1.

With a triumphant bark of a laugh, Rogue slid into the action, twirling her blades and cutting of Twisted's legs. His attempt to regain his foot proved futile she stabbed her sword into the ground.
~~~~

His legs regenerated around the object, and he found that she had put them right where his knees were, preventing movement.

The attempts to remove them were also rendered useless as Rogue summoned another blade and severed both of his hands, before raising her blade, prepared to bring it down on him. He forced his hands to heal faster, summoning two blades of his own. The first he used to block her, the second he used to cut off his legs, before blasting flames to propel himself backward.

Twisted slammed his fist into the ground, propelling himself up to a standing position. He a light wind of energy behind him. Before he could turn, the mystic's energized fist bore into his back, rendering his spine useless for a moment.

The very second it healed, Twisted pushed off his hands, sending him high into the air, giving him time to plan... or so he thought. Venom shot up from the ground and struck him in the gut, before Deathbringer's astral projection appeared, sending the fox plummeting back down to earth. Flint blasted him the moment he was up before Lefte joined in from the other side.

So, he did the only thing he could do.

"I YIELD!" he shouted.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"W-why?" Glory questioned, her eyes filling with tears. She had just gotten Deathbringer back... and now he was saying that he had to go again.

"I can't stay like this forever," he told her. "And... my mother is waiting for me on the other side..."

"But I need you..." Glory cried. "You can't just leave!"

It wasn't fair! Everyone else had their escape! Everyone else had that one person they could lean on... why didn't she get that? Why wasn't she allowed that luxury?

"There may still be a way," Lefte said suddenly. "Venom... if you
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

were to attach Deathbringer's soul, you could make him a new body... of course, it'd be up to Deathbringer to accept you..."

Before the nightwing could object, the klyntarian jumped out and latched onto the projection. At once, he was sent back into the black void, where his mother stood... except... this time she didn't look so happy...

"Deathbringer..." she said sadly.

"No," he insisted, knowing what was coming. "I can go with you--"

"She needs you..." Quickstrike insisted. "And... I think you need her."

He couldn't object to that... whenever he wasn't near Glory, he always felt like there was something missing in his life. But this was his mother!

"I'll always be waiting for you," she assured him, kissing him on the head. "I promise you."

He leaned into her, and embraced her. "I love you," he told her.

"I love you too," she told him.

~~~~~~~~~~

The rainwing watched with wide eyes as Deathbringer was reconstructed before her very eyes, before collapsing to the floor. The rainwing ran over to him and pressed her ear into his chest.

Tears filled her eyes once more, and she sobbed, hugging him tightly against her.

She could hear his heartbeat... Deathbringer was alive.
~~~~~~~~~~

Who Needs Kneecaps?

Well... this was embarrassing.

Twisted had helped to destroy entire dimension, destroyed entire species in less than a week... and yet, here he was, sitting inside of an oversized birdcage. And as if to put salt in the wound, the floor was covered in randomly placed bumps that prevented any sitting position from being comfortable.

Of course, he understood the reasoning. If he was allowed to be too comfortable, then he would be able to think better and find a way to escape sooner. It was actually quite smart of them... but that didn't make him any less annoyed!

"You're too much of a coward to beat me, huh?" the fox questioned Flint, who was double-checking the enchantment on the bars.

"Maybe," he said simply.

"Really? And what would your girlfriend think of such a thing?" he questioned, giving the Cawthon an aggravating smirk. However, Flint just shrugged. "The silent treatment, I see. You know, I really expected more from a Cawthon."

"Ok," Flint responded, and Twisted growled. He'd locked him out... He was going to be able to manipulate him... and he had strategically kept Rogue away from him since she was more emotionally vulnerable... smart, very smart. They'd grown quite a bit from the last time he saw them. And judging from their hand-to-hand combat skills, Rogue had been teaching them, meaning it would be harder to beat them in the future.

No matter, he thought to himself. *This is but a minor setback... soon, we will have* ***him*** *on our side... Then no one can stop us.*

He remembered the transmission they received and shivered in excitement at the raw power that would be on their side.

Soon... very soon...

Or 4 or 5 more years...

"Flint!" Lefte called urgently, and Twisted's ears perked up. "Something is happening. Dimension 4556ADG."

"It can wait," Flint said. "We gotta secure--"

"Believe it or not, it's more important," Lefte told him, and Flint looked between the bear and the fox.

"4546ADG?" Flint thought. "Lefte, that timeline runs at a snail's pace compared to this one! By the time we'll be done the metal will have rusted to dirt!"

"I've run the calculations," the mystic assured him. "The mission will take 3 weeks there, which is only 2 years here."

"Well, we can't just leave him!"

"The cage nullifies all of his abilities, and with their general gone, the Nightmares will retreat."

Once again, Flint looked between him and the fox once again before grunting in frustration. "Alright, let Glory know," he told him. "And tell her to keep the details behind the kingdom relocating a secret. The more people who know about it in this dimension, the more likely it is that it'll leak out. Then bounty hunters from all over the multiverse will come for Twisted."

The mystic nodded and went to carry out his orders. "Wow," Twisted said. "You're not great under pressure are you?"

The fox got excited when Flint tensed. "Guess not," the wolf replied cooly, disappointing him.

Well, this surely wasn't ideal... Twisted had hoped to capture Deathbringer and Glory and then replicate the required conditions in a controlled environment, but this would have to do. He would have to simply watch and hope that what he had done was enough...

~~~~~~

It had only been a few minutes, but it felt like a lifetime since Deathbringer was last alive. Everything felt so... heavy. Having a corporeal form was so tiring.

Welcome back, Venom welcomed, and the rightwing couldn't help but smile. He never thought he'd miss the symbiote and yet... there they were...

He opened his mouth to speak but found that he would only make little groaning noises... nothing in his body felt solid...

You're gonna have to sit tight for a bit, the klyntarian told him. **I've never actually... made a body before. In fact, this shouldn't even be possible. I require a physical host but whatever that mystic did... it somehow bypassed my very biology.**

Right... he remembered. *My body is no longer my own...*

Now, he and Venom were entirely one being. With Deathbringer being the soul and Venom being the body. So, for the next few hours or so, Deathbringer waited as Venom figured out how to create a body. He knew how to construct the things Deathbringer needed most (the brain, heart, lungs, etc) since they were the things a symbiote usually connected to... and also because they were the things they ate the most...

It was the more complicated structures, specifically the nerves, that had Venom confounded. So, Deathbringer had to follow certain commands to wiggle his claws, bend his elbows, etc. Then, once the basic physical movement was down, he got down, he got back to Deathbringer's senses, then returned to physical movement.

Wingbeats were the first thing he heard. So... he was flying? Or being carried?

"Glory..." he was finally able to speak, though only in a whisper.

Hey, dial it down, I'm not done with the vocal cords yet! Venom scolded. Whoever was holding him seemed to flinch. "Queen Glory," a male voice called. "He's awake."
~~~~~~

Another pair of wingbeats joined him, and he heard another voice gasp. "Deathbringer..." that was Glory, he would know her voice anywhere.

"Present," he joked, and Venom gave him a growl of annoyance. Glory let out a soft cry.

"You're ok," she said, sounding like it was through tears. "I... I thought I lost you..."

I thought I lost you... he thought. Suddenly, his body went into overdrive. **Done!** the symbiote proclaimed. Deathbringer gasped awake. He could see now that there was a small group of 8 soldiers, 2 next to Glory, 2 carrying Deathbringer, and 4 carrying something big with a cloth over it.

"Land here," Glory ordered the guards, who nodded and brought them to the ground. Deathbringer breathed heavily, taking in his surroundings. He felt little shifts in his body as Venom made little finishing touches.

The rainwing was suddenly by his side and embraced him. "My moons, it feels like it's been so long," she told him, breathing shakily. Before he could respond, she suddenly let go and punched him in the gut. "Don't scare me like that again! As your queen, I forbid it!"

The rightwing chuckled. "Yes, your majesty," he said, and she hugged him again.

"Deathbringer..." she said. "Why didn't you tell me what you were going through?"

He hesitated. "I just... I didn't want you to get hurt..." he said. *So much for that,* he thought, guilt overwhelming him... If he had just trusted Glory, they might've been able to avoid this. But he didn't, and now not only did Glory get hurt but the entire kingdom was forced out of their homes... because of his own selfishness... he wasn't going to let it happen again.

"Well, none of that matters now," Glory decided, wiping away her

tears. "What matters now is what happens next." She looked to the guards. "You guys go, we'll join you later."

They nodded and took off, and Glory turned back to Deathbringer. "Flint told me that we have to keep the Nightmares a secret," Glory told him.

"What? Why?" the nightwing questioned. "the nightmares are dangerous, we can't just keep them a secret! What if they come back?"

"They told me that it won't happen," Glory said uncertainly.

"It wouldn't be the first time they were wrong," Venom pointed out, and Glory groaned.

"Well, I don't know," she admitted. "On one hand, they know a lot more about it than we do... but on the other hand... it just doesn't feel right..."

"If I may," somebody interjected, and Deathbringer's eyes widened. His head snapped to the cage, where the sound originated from.

"Was that who I think it was?" the nightwing questioned.

"If you think it's a sexy fox who's single and ready to mingle, then yes," Twisted said, and Deathbringer looked at Glory.

"Why isn't he dead?" he demanded.

"He's subdued," Glory assured him. "His abilities are nullified. He's harmless."

"That doesn't answer my question!" Deathbringer exclaimed. "He killed me and who knows how many dragons, and almost killed you!"

"They *can't* kill me," Twisted interjected. "My regenerative factor is too strong. Even if they could, Flint's girlfriend has something for me apparently, cause she wants me alive."

It's fine, Deathbringer, Venom told the nightwing, sensing his

rising anger. **He's not gonna cause much trouble from in there...**

Deathbringer couldn't believe it. Here was one of the most dangerous being's in the multiverse, and everyone was telling him it was *fine?* He refused to believe it. No matter what, he wasn't going to let his guard down... he would never let his guard down again.

"I'll carry the cage," he told Glory. He took one step, and his knee collapsed the opposite way it was supposed to. Glory exclaimed in horror.

"**Sorry,**" Venom shouted. "**Forgot to make kneecaps!**"

You Have The Right To Remain Silent!

WARNING: This chapter contains imagery that some of you may find disturbing.

When Glory found where the kingdom had relocated, not only were there hundreds of very confused rainwings and nightwings waiting for her but also 2 more very confused friends of hers.

"Glory, what's happening?" Sunny asked, accompanied by Clay; and she swears she loves her friends, but Glory couldn't help but groan at their sight. *Great, another person who I have to lie to,* she thought. *Or do I?*

Lefte had told her that she couldn't tell anyone unless she absolutely trusted them to keep it a secret. She could trust her friends, right? Even Sunny had improved a lot. A secret as important as this one? She wouldn't dare let it get out!

So, she took them aside and explained everything. Since her castle was now Nightmare territory, they simply had to pull them aside and send Deathbringer to stand guard.

"A fox the shape of a scavenger but the size of a dragon?" Clay said in disbelief. "A parasite--"

"Not a parasite," Deathbringer said from his patrol.

"A not-parasite living inside of Deathbringer's body?"

"Well, technically Deathbringer is living in Venom's body now," Glory corrected. "But... yes, that's the gist of it."

Sunny and Clay looked at each other, and Glory sighed. "You don't

believe me," she realized.

"It's not that we don't believe... that you believe that..." Sunny said carefully. "But... please understand, it's really hard to believe."

Deathbringer landed next to them, and, without warning, transformed. He grew to 3x his size, except, this form was slightly different. This time, red energy formed spikes along his arms, and his eyes were red inside of white.

"**Is that enough proof for you?**" Venom questioned smugly. As expected, Sunny and Clay both screamed, before tendrils shout out to clasp their snouts shut.

"Deathbringer!" Glory scolded. She was trying to *avoid* scaring them too badly! "That was mean."

"Their fault for not believing you," Venom said simply. Tears were starting to form in her two friend's eyes from the pure fear. Glory approached them slowly.

"He can let you go if you promise not to scream," the queen told them, and they both nodded vigorously. She signaled to Venom, and he cautiously released the two dragons. Sunny let out a nervous laugh.

"Glory!" she squeaked, before clearing her throat. "I-I'm sorry for not believing you..."

"So... it's all true then," Clay realized with a nervous chuckle.

"Every word," Venom confirmed, reverting to Deathbringer. They both gulped.

"We need to keep this a secret," the queen reminded them. "If this secret gets out... it could spell out doom for all of Pyrrhia."

"Queen Glory."

Crap, Glory thought. Deathbringer had come to show Sunny and Clay but hadn't gone back to standing guard. She snapped around to find not one, but two dragons staring there. *What? Why is there a*

sandwing over here?

Wait a minute... the second dragon... she recognized that nightwing! And now that she thought about it... she recognized the other one too! They were part of the Jade Winglet that defeated Darkstalker...

"My name is Moonwatcher, and this is Qibli," the nightwing continued. "I am a nightwing born under two moons. I had a vision of Foxy.

"Foxy?" Deathbringer questioned, and she hesitated.

"Well... that's what he was being called in my vision," she explained. "I am here to inform you that Fox-- Twisted must stand trial for his crimes."

"That's idiotic," Venom interjected, and even though they claimed to know what was happening, all of them seemed terrified. **"Doing so would only delay him being locked away."**

Moonwatcher cleared her throat. "I uhh... Well... My vision tells me that if this doesn't happen then... well... he wins. He uses this moment as manipulative material later on to escape containment... And as continued insurance, I will stand testimony. To ensure his honesty."

"Wait, Moon, you didn't mention that part," Qibli said worriedly. She turned and flashed him a small smile.

"Don't worry, Qibli," she assured him. "He's in a cage, how much damage can he do?"

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

So much. So much damage. Moon was nearly peeing herself in fear. She had seen him in her visions, the atrocities he was capable of; things that made Darkstalker seem like a butterfly in comparison. But... she knew that this *had* to do this, and she had to succeed or else... Well, she *really* didn't want to think about what would happen if she failed...
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

The trial was held inside of a cave not far from the village, but just far enough so that any commotion wouldn't be heard by the citizens. On Glory's order, the curtain was lifted, and Twisted was revealed. Between the 7 dragons present, there were generally two reactions: completely horrified (demonstrated by Sunny, Clay, Qibli, and Winter); and those terrified, but doing their best to hide it (Deathbringer, Moon, and Glory).

"Finally!" Twisted shouted. "Any longer in there and I woulda been white when you pulled that curtain!" The fox's eyes *immediately* darted to Moonwatcher, who stiffened under his malevolent green gaze. *Don't show fear,* she reminded himself. "Ah! Moonwatcher! I was wondering when you'd appear in this timeline! So, have you and Qibli done the dirty yet? Are there little hybrids running up and down the walls of--"

"Silence!" Glory demanded, and much to Moon's relief he obeyed. The nightwing's face was completely flushed, and she refused to make eye contact with the fox. "Twisted, you are on trial. Do you know your rights?"

"Maybe," he said, earning an unamused look from the queen and her bodyguard. "Y'all are no fun. Yeah, I know my rights."

"Good, then let us proceed," she decided. "Deathbringer, Venom, on the way here, you told us of his *inspiration room.* Could you two explain just how many counts of murder that room accounts for alone?"

"134," Venom answered. **"I counted when we were in there."**

"Technically, you have no proof that *I* was the one who killed them..." he pointed out.

"Moonwatcher," Glory called. "Did Twisted kill the dragons in his inspiration room?"

Moon took a breath and pushed herself into his mind...

Over the years, Moon had gotten much more skilled in her abilities. With intense focus, she could force a vision to appear, and even

force herself past some dragon's mental barriers. But none of that was useful here.

Twisted's mind was protected not by a barrier, but by a castle wall lined with artillery. Attempting to push past it only brought her pain. "I-I don't know..." she realized. If she couldn't read his mind then... how in Pyrrhia was she supposed to help?! Qibli put a talon on her shoulder, sensing her distress, but it didn't do anything to soothe her in this case... Not when the world was at stake.

"We can still charge you for concealment of a dead body," Glory decided. "134 counts of which are most definitely punishable by a death sentence. Not to mention your countless acts of murder."

"Yes, but you miss one crucial detail," he told them. "You *can't* kill me. Not even I could kill me, trust me, I've tried!"

"Maybe not," Deathbringer interjected. "But we can send you to rot in a prison cell for the rest of your pitiful existence."

"You can't send me to rot *forever,"* Twisted insisted. "That would be against the law."

"We just need to keep you until Flint returns," the queen reminded him. "Then, you will no longer be under our jurisdiction but theirs."

"And you're alright with this?" he asked, suddenly turning to Clay and Sunny. "Of them practically sending a fox to his death!"

They didn't respond and he scoffed. "So much for civilized," he spat.

"The queen demands you answer one final question before the end of your trial," Glory announced. "What is the Nightmare's reason for being here?"

"I'm afraid that's classified," he said. "Of course, I'm sure if she *really* tried, Moon could pull that info from me..."

She tried, she *really* tried... but it was impossible. "Here, I'll make it easier for you," he decided, and suddenly, the wall shattered, and she stumbled into his mind. Unlike usually, when Moon was only

able to see what people were thinking at the moment... Foxy had completely opened his mind to her, allowing them to not just peak, but to explore.

And so, she did.

And oh, how much she regretted it.

This creature should not exist, it didn't deserve it. The part of his mind she was given access to wasn't will anger, nor grief, just a sick, evil, twisted sin. The devil was its father, its mother mistress Death; that was the only explanation for this.

Everything around her ceased to exist as she was pulled in, even her own talon withering away as was drawn deeper and deeper into this insanity. She needed to find an anchor, something familiar. A memory, an emotion, anything a living thing would have... but she came up empty every time, and so she went deeper, desperately trying to find it.

Before she knew it, she was drowning. Drowning in this infinite sea of evil; and soon, despair joined her terror. She didn't want to believe it. She didn't want to believe that something like this could exist in any timeline, in any multiverse, so she just kept digging deeper into this rabbit hole.

She saw glimpses, flashes of his past and future. All the horrible things he'd done, all the terrible things he would do.

Snapping a father's neck in front of his child.

Dancing down a flight of stairs littered with blood and corpses.

Shushing a child as their family is murdered.

Catching a bullet mid-flight and swallowing it.

Slitting a dragon's throat ear-to-ear with a deranged smile.

Someone might've been yelling her name, maybe even shaking her, but she didn't feel it... did she even care? She was floating, falling, drowning. She was dead but enlightened. She could see the cruelties

of life and the mercies of death. She could hear everything a deaf person could, and whispers of holy truth of the damned could fathom.

This creature would kill everyone and everything to achieve a hellish utopia. She saw it happen. She saw Qibli's throat being slit, Winter's head being devoured, Glory drowning in a pool of ink, Deathbringer being disintegrated in a beam of light, her mother's skull being crushed.

And then she saw herself, by this creature's side.

"Moon!" Qibli shouted, and she was freed from her first prison... "Are you alright?"

"I will be," she assured him. She knew what she had to do now, to achieve true peace, and finally be happy. "I will be..."

They all watched in horror and Moon, with a thankful smile, dragged her talons across her throat.

I'll Kill You

"Looks like she couldn't handle the truth," Foxy said simply. Qibli hurried over to Moon's corpse, attempting to stop the bleeding, while the others stared in horror as the life drained from the nightwing's eyes

"Moon!" Qibli sobbed. "Moon, come on. Hang in there!"

"You're wasting your time Romeo," Foxy said indifferently. "She doesn't *want* to be alive anymore."

But the sandwing refused to acknowledge him. "Come on," he cried desperately. "Prove him wrong. You're the hero, Moon! You can't die here... we have a future together, you said so yourself..."

But his pleas went unanswered, and soon, the light in her eyes had been snuffed out... Qibli dropped her body in disbelief... she couldn't be dead... it wasn't possible... He looked up at the other dragons in the room, who were all staring with just as much disbelief as he felt. Then, he met Twisted's eyes.

They were so... *smug.* Like he had just proved a point rather than just killed the love of his life. He didn't think about it, he just *did.*

"I'll kill you!" he declared, leaping towards the cage. He was going to tear this fox to shreds!

Before his talons even made contact with the bars, he was gripped by the throat. "You brought me a snack, how thoughtful," he said as the sides of his mouth tore themselves opened, his jaw unhinging like a rainwings before moving toward the sandwing.

The arm holding him suddenly ignited in blue flames, making the fox let go and howl in pain. Sunny and Clay both ran to aid a Qibli who had quite literally just looked down the maw of death.

Foxy loved it. He looked at the terrified dragons with glee. He was

one of the very few who knew that fear was the most powerful force in the multiverse. At this moment, he is at the top of the food chain.

Suddenly he felt something quite warm cover him, starting at his left. He turned to see Qibli, at it again, blasting him with fire. *How stupid. Did he not get the memo?*

"Sweetheart," Foxy cooed. "You should know that does not affect me."

But the sandwing continued, and when he ran out of breath, he gasped, then started another stream of flame. Tears poured from his eyes as he tried his best to keep a steady stream of fire going. Honestly, it was starting to annoy Foxy how hot it was getting. Finally, Qibli could no longer hold himself together and broke down crying.

"You killed Moon!" he roared.

"Correction, she killed herself," Foxy corrected, and the amount of hate that was in his eyes quite honestly caused even Foxy to be aroused.

"Everyone calm down," Glory demanded yelled, then glared at Foxy. "I have come to my own decision. This creature will be locked away for the rest of his life, whether it ends soon, or he is immortal. What do you have to say for yourself?"

"You have no way of justifying this," he said.

"Every dragon in this room just witnessed you murdering this nightwing!"

"She murdered herself. Even if you were to claim that I murdered her, what evidence do you have to support that claim? She was reading my mind and then she just..." He did a thumbs down and blew a raspberry.

"Die," Sunny said suddenly. They all went silent, staring at the small sandwing. "I hope you suffer a violent death and rot in hell. I hope you never see the light of day again. So, I say we put it up to a vote.

All in favor of letting this a**hole rot in a cell the rest of his life, raise your right talon!"

After a long moment of hesitation, everyone rose their talon. This was... unlike Sunny, definitely.

"So," Sunny continued. "Glory asked once, but I'm gonna ask again. What do you have to say for yourself?

For the first time, Foxy looked defeated. He looked generally appalled by what was happening to him. He looked like he was about to throw himself against the bars in rage, trying to get to Sunny. But, he only stood there, staring blankly at the sandwing. Then, finally. After a seemingly endless silence, he did what nobody expected him to do.

He laughed.

And laughed.

And laughed.

And laughed.

He laughed so much, that it no longer seemed menacing, but like he

just heard a hilarious joke. He laughed alright, and he enjoyed it. He took his time to calm down, wiped away a tear that had manifested during his hysterics, looked Sunny right in the eye. And said:

"I'm going to kill you. Every single one of you. I will rip you open, and devour your insides."

"We're done here," Deathbringer declared, pulling the cloak over the cage.

"I'm serious," Foxy continued, then began pointing at random people in the room. "You're gonna die! You're gonna die! Yes, Clay! Even your dragonet's gonna die. And Qibli! You know that brother you never got to meet because your mother sold him at hatching? Well, even if you don't, he's still gonna die! And Deathbringer! You're future dragonet is gonna die too!"

Deathbringer stopped in his tracks, grinding his teeth. "Don't," Glory urged.

"Even that whole oath to abstinence completely falls away when he gets in bed with Glory. **EXPOSED!!**"

The nightwing suddenly lunged toward the cage. His skin melted away as his body turned to liquid, moved through the bars, rematerialized, then slammed into Foxy. Before he could react, Deathbringer grabbed Foxy's leg, wheeled it over his head, then slammed him back to the ground. He climbed on top of Twisted and roared, before bringing his fists down onto the fox over and over again. *Die, die,* he thought as he pummeled the fox.

By the time he regained enough control over himself to stop, his fist, as well as Twisted's face was covered in blood.

"If you EVER speak that way about Glory and me again, I won't stop," he warned Foxy, who simply cackled.

"Ok," Foxy said through a mouth full of blood. "But just one question. How would your mother feel about you breaking your oath?"

And with that, Deathbringer's rage was unleashed again.

"Deathbringer!" Glory roared. "Stop it!"

But Deathbringer didn't listen. He was hungry. Hungry for Foxy's blood. After all of the pain Foxy had caused Glory, it was time for him to die. They tried to open the door and pull Deathbringer off of Twisted, but Venom stopped them from doing anything. Twisted had turned his own son against him... he was out for blood, too.

He felt a talon on his shoulder and whirled around, fist already raised and ready to strike. He didn't get the chance. He was instantly pacified as a knife was shoved against his throat, drawing blood.

And Glory was holding the blade.

There Is Still A Plan

The way Glory looked at Deathbringer at that moment... that was so HOT. She had the look in her eyes. THE look. The look when you finally realize what is necessary. What you have to do. The look I had when I knew I had to kill my daughters. The look of pity, revelation, relief, guilt, loathing, compassion, danger, threat. It is such a beautiful look. The fact that Deathbringer has the potential to hit that only 10 days later, is not even surprising. The only thing surprising about it is that this dimension has the capability of Deathbringer waiting up to 3 more years before even considering it. It is... strange. Mortals are strange.

"Stop it," Glory demanded fiercely, pressing the blade firmly against the nightwing's throat. "All of you."

"No matter how much you punch me," Foxy said. "It won't bring Moon back."

"Don't engage," Glory demanded. "He's only trying to get under your scales."

"I have already succeeded," Foxy insisted. "I mean, I succeeded so much, that now, to the audience, *you* are the crazy ones."

He was right... No longer was anyone looking at Foxy, but at Deathbringer, as if he was the monster... including Glory

"Deathbringer," the queen called, not removing the knife from his neck. "Step out of the cage."

"Glory I-" Deathbringer tried, but the knife was pressed harder against his neck. **Just save it,** Venom urged. **I don't think she's in the mood to negotiate...**

And so, Deathbringer obeyed. He slowly stepped out of the cage,

before the door was locked behind him again. "We need to arrange for Moon's funeral," Glory said solemnly. "But understand... the details behind her death must be kept a secret."

"What?!" Qibli outraged. "How am I supposed to keep this a secret?!"

"I know it's hard," Glory said. "But we *must* maintain secrecy! Unless you want all of Pyrrhia to suffer the same fate as Moon!"

The sandwing stiffened and nodded. "I will inform her mother of her passing..." she told Qibli, then turned to her friends. "I'm sorry that we couldn't enjoy more time together... but there is business I must attend to."

Before they could respond, Glory stormed out of the cave, her bodyguard close behind. "Glory," Deathbringer tried. "I'm so sorry..."

"Save it," she demanded. "You better get yourself under control, Deathbringer. If you experience another outburst like that, you will be permanently fired from your position."

"But-"

"Don't you dare tell me that you're under control. The slightest insult sent you into a homicidal rage, so don't bullsh*t me, Deathbringer."

"I can be better."

Glory growled in annoyance, turning away from him and launching herself into the air with one powerful flap. Deathbringer was stuck in place for a few moments, before hurrying after her. *I've done nothing but fail her...* he realized. *First keeping my secret... Then leaving her to fight Twisted alone... Now, this...*

"I'm sorry..." he said quietly, though he knew that Glory couldn't hear him, he still made this unheard promise. "I promise... I won't let you down again..."

~~~~~~
~~~~~~

She wasn't *actually* mad at Deathbringer.

She rarely ever was, really. He was always just... convenient, an easy outlet for her rage. And she knew he could take it because every time he always just shrugged it off. He had always seen it for what it was: she loved him, but she also loved to hate him.

But this time... this time was different.

Whenever they were flying together, Deathbringer had always, *always* flown close to her. To the point where their wingtips would nearly brush. But this time, Deathbringer stayed at a distance. Close enough to protect her, but just far enough... as if he was going out of his way to make sure she didn't feel uncomfortable.

But now, after living with his shenanigans so long... She felt uncomfortable *without* him so close.

She should've known that it would be too much under all of this stress... She knew she should apologize, but she was far too busy to do so! There was so much to do, to think about. What was she going to say to the rainwings? How was she going to explain that they had to permanently abandon their homes for a reason she couldn't tell them?

There was so much to do... she just wanted to cuddle up next to Deathbringer and forget about this whole issue. To cherish that he was back from the dead after seeing him be decapitated by a kick.

But she couldn't... she had a responsibility to uphold... she just wished she had more time with him...

~~~~~~

Disease. That was the best she could come up with? Some kind of infection in all of the plants in that area? Well, he guessed he couldn't be *too* hard on her... Twisted's plan put Queen Glory under a lot of pressure.

What was the final goal of this mission? Carnage had no idea. He was just there to carry out orders and have a little bit of fun in the process.
~~~~~~

He had received a transmission from the Nightmares, telling him to retreat. Why? Again, he was given no reasoning other than "there is still a plan." So now, he was hiding out in the Scorpian Den. He had no idea why they decided that the Desert was the best place for a klyntarian, whose weakness was fire and heat, to go hide out and regain his strength; but once again, he was only there to follow orders.

Of course, the orders hadn't mentioned anything about eating... so a few missing reports were popping up here and there. People go missing in the Scorpian Den all the time, right? Who would miss a dragonet here or a guard there?

Of course, the heat still took its toll on Carnage. His host kept trying to escape from his control. He was attempting every day, now. Of course, the weak-minded rainwing had no chance against such a powerful symbiote, but, it was still tiresome and very annoying.

The dragons that may be a threat had all been eliminated, except for Peril (which, of course, there was a reason for). Animus, cataclysm characters, dragons too curious or smart for their own good.

There was still a plan...

Tensions High

"Morning your majesty," Deathbringer said, and Glory glanced at him suspiciously.

"What? No, *Hey Beautiful* with a sassy wink?" she questioned jokingly.

"You always get mad at me when I do that," he said simply, but the worry in her eyes only grew. It had been like this for a while. He had lost his usual sarcastic flare...The rainwing couldn't remember the last she saw that smirk of his...

She opened her mouth to say something but there was a knock on the door before a rainwing entered. "Queen Glory, you have a message from Queen Ruby of the Skywings!"

He handed her a scroll, which Glory hastily took sitting back down at her desk to read it.

Dear Queen Glory of The Rainwings and Nightwings,
Sorry to reach out to you so soon after our meeting, but I figured you'd find this crucial to the rebuilding of your Kingdom. Recently in the Sky Kingdom, we have been very fortunate in terms of resources, so much so in fact, that we are running into issues regarding storage. Given your recent hardships, I concluded the best course of action for both of our tribes is to organize a trade.

"Oh thank the moons!" Glory said, collapsing onto her desk. She had been worried that it was bad news... that seemed to be the only kind of news they got nowadays. Her heart sunk a little when she turned and didn't find Deathbringer looking over her shoulder at the Queen's confidential letters; instead, he was standing in the corner like an actual, professional bodyguard... and it pissed her off! She turned back to paper and kept reading.

As for the conditions of this trade, as you know, I have recently begun an expansion project. The project is doing well, however, it is behind

schedule due to a lack of workers. I ask that you send at least 60 able-bodied dragons, as well as MightyClaws (as his abilities will come in handy), for 200 days.

"Sloth on a stick..." she cursed. She needed Mightyclaws for the rebuilding of the Rainforest Kingdom! But at the same time, supplies were very much needed! Naturally, the fruit on the border of the rainforest kingdom wasn't as plentiful, and many residents were beginning to complain about a lack of food. She had organized a program solely to plant fruit-bearing plant life, but that wouldn't solve the issue until years later!

"Queen Ruby wants 60 able-bodied dragons as well as Mightyclaws in exchange for food and supplies," Glory said, turning to Deathbringer. "What should take priority? The needs of the people or the reconstruction of our Kingdom?"

"60 dragons *plus* Mightyclaws?" Deathbringer questioned. "Perhaps you could organize a compromise?"

The rainwing nodded. "But Mightyclaws really is indispensable! What could beat a dragon who can draw something to life?"

The moment she asked it, the solution popped into her brain: a super-dragon; a rightwing whose strength rivaled that of 60 dragons! But doing that would mean exposing the secret to Queen Ruby...

"The only other alternative is sending you..." Glory said. "But... that would mean exposing the secret... is it worth it?"

"Its not my place to say, your majesty," he said respectfully, and the rainwing growled. She needed the old Deathbringer back! This new one was... it was just so strange! So... not him! It was distracting...

"Fine then..." she said, finally making up her mind. She grabbed a scroll of her own, and wrote a reply stating that they should meet 2 weeks from then to discuss something, and that it was crucial that she kept their meeting as much of a secret as possible. It was the only way... Glory would be killing two scavengers with one stone. Getting supplies and removing distractions...

Moons above she hated this... how after being broken by his death, he had become more of a distraction than anything. She hated that the solution to her problems was giving up Deathbringer... But as far as she could see... this was the best option for her Kingdom. And wasn't that what being a queen is all about? Putting her subjects needs above her own?

Glory suddenly stood up, shaking her head as if it would help to clear the tornado in her brain. There was still so much to do... and she still hadn't even had time to think about what the Nightmares next move will be...

And then there was Twisted...

He was behaving himself, but that's what worried her. When she met him, she thought he could be anything *but* mundane. And yet, that was all they had gotten from him. Despite standard inappropriate comments about her and Deathbringer, he's been mostly quiet... and though she should probably be thankful for it, with someone as predictable as Foxy...

"I need a vacation..." she decided aloud, chuckling at the thought. *Queens don't get vacations...* she knew that, of course. But it was times like these that Glory almost wished she could pass on her problems to another queen every month or so.

She looked at Deathbringer expantantly, waiting for him to offer her a drink so she could say "Queens don't drink away their problems" only to accept one anyway... but he said nothing... Just stood there with that stupid respectful posture...

"Deathbringer, could you leave for a moment?" Glory asked, and her heart fluttered when he opened his mouth to refuse... but then he snapped it shut, nodded, and left! He *actually* left when she ordered him to!

She knew that at this point, she sounded like one of those brats who expect people to read their minds and just *know* what they really want, but she couldn't help it! Deathbringer just always *had* been able to read her mind... now what would she do?

She looked back at her desk... at all the complaints. When they had dropped them off today, it had taken 2 separate barrels. It usually only took hald of one. There was so much to do... her friends had written her countless letters that she hadn't even read yet. She was so busy...

How much sleep had she gotten in the past week? Was it 15? More? Less? It felt like less? If she stood for more than a few minutes she got dizzy... but sleeping was worse. Nightmares about Twisted killing those she loved, sometimes Deathbringer, sometimes her friends...

Before they disappeared, she had told Lefte about her dreams, and he had told her that prophetic dreams were sure signs of mystic energy... but unlike Deathbringer, she hadn't been exposed to it... in fact, she had been inside during the entire ordeal! Even if she hadn't, she'd been having those dreams since before the storm...

When else could she have ever been in contact with mystic energy?

She shook her head. That was a later problem, she needed to focus on the now problems...

Like the 412 complaints she still had to address...

It hurts...

Queen Glory made her way through the Skywing Kingdom, Deathbringer at her side. It had been renovated, now looking more like a modern city than a village!

Advertisements flapped away on lightposts (which had recently exploded in popularity after Mastermind invented them), dragons milled about their business until they saw the queen, their eyes widening as they stepped out the way. A missing poster with a picture of Flame was carried down the road by the wind.

They finally reached Queen Ruby's castle, where the rainwing couldn't help but feel a little salty that *she* still had a castle palace. Queen Ruby met them, and, after dismissing all guards but Deathbringer, began the meeting.

"I can't help but feel a bit skeptical that you refused to let me bring a bodyguard, yet you stay well protected..." Ruby informed her.

"I understand your suspicion," she assured. "And I thank you for your cooperation. But first... I just need to ask if I can trust you--and before you say anything! The reason I need to know is that this secret... if it gets out, every dragon in Pyrrhia will die."

Queen Ruby stared at her for a moment, before her brows furrowed in determination. "You can trust me."

Queen Glory took a deep breath, looked at Deathbringer, and gave him the signal. The nightwing nodded, and in an instant, he was Venom.

"Good evening your majesty."

~~~~~~

He really thought this would be easier. He really did!

He'd had to wait longer, but those times he at least had something
~~~~~~

to do! But there was nobody to play Uno with when you're in a dark cage! Twisted was alone with his thoughts, and he always loved to be alone with his thoughts, but he'd already thought out everything! He had his plan, and now he just has to wait! It was like in Minecraft where you have everything planned out, but can't get started until this stupid iron smelts!

Except it was a stack of 900, and he needed every piece...

But it would be worth it in the end... The Nightmares would gain, as to their current knowledge, the most powerful mystic in the history of the multiverse. One capable of killing gods and devils alike. With it... they'd win the war in a matter of weeks!

He wouldn't let this get him down... not even all the times his old self came out, resulting in him sobbing and desperately attempting to end his own life.

Just... a few more years...

God, please end me... Please... It hurts so much....

Just a few more years.

Short chapter, I know. But the next one will be longer!

200 days

Deathbringer wanted so desperately to cry.

200 days... that's how long he would be separated from Glory. The girl he returned to this life for sent him away. He had told her that it was up to her because it was, she was the queen, that's how it works, but... he hadn't really thought she'd send him away.

Had he really failed her that much? Had he been such a failure that she didn't even want him around anymore? Had she even changed her mind about wanting him alive?

Glory said she'd visit him but... was that really true? Or was this her way of ridding herself of him for good?

It didn't feel fair...

No... he told himself as he dug his own claws into his arm, wincing. *It's you... you did something wrong...*

Suddenly, his arms shot to his side and he was pulled against the wall. **That's it, Deathbringer. This is getting out of hand!** Venom growled in his head. **None of this is your fault, it's just Glory being an indecisive little--**

"Don't finish that sentence!" Deathbringer warned the symbiote, trying to push off the wall to no avail. "What else could it be? I have the be the problem!"

What else could it be? That's a joke, right? How about being forced out of the rainforest by the Nightmares?

"Because I was too much of a coward to speak up!"

Please! I would've killed Glory if you *did* speak up!

"What?!"

Oh, don't act so surprised!

"Thats it, let me down, NOW!"

Make me!

~~~~~~

Queen Ruby was alerted to Deathbringer's room by her staff. She specifically instructed that no one but her is to enter, as to ensure his secret stayed safe. But it was incredibly annoying because *she* had to investigate any time he was causing a ruckus.

However, this sight was a strange one. When she opened the door, Deathbringer was not there to greet her. Through the power of deductive reasoning, she concluded that it was because he was cursing, thrashing around on the ceiling, struggling against his symbiote.

His head split into two, one for each entity to talk through. And moons above did they have some things to say to each other! Curses spewed out of both of their mouths, and occasionally tentacles would shoot out and bounce Deathbringer across the room. Meanwhile Queen Ruby could only stand there in utter and complete shock.

After a couple minutes of this, Ruby finally regained her voice, clearing her throat. Deathbringer immediately snapped to attention, both heads staring at the skywing queen as they melded back together. Whatever force that kept him against the ceiling disappeared and the nightwing crashed through a table into the floor, bouncing back up a moment later.

"Your majesty," he said regally, and the queen couldn't help but shake her head. *This is what helped saved Pyrrhia?*

~~~~~~

Deathbringer's tentacle lifted the final support beam into place, and he sighed, wiping sweat from his forehead. That was 10 more done today. After the first 12 days or so, Queen Ruby told him to change his focus. The walls and wiring would be done later, for now, all he

was responsible for was essentially making the outline of the building and putting in the foundation.

I think that's enough for today, Venom said.

"I think we can do some more," Deathbringer told him.

Easy for you to say, it's not your tentacles.

"Touche."

Deathbringer sat down at the site. He'd head home in a minute, but he just need some time to rest his---

Glory...

The moment he stopped working, the moment his mind had space for another thought, she popped into his mind. He couldn't help but think about her. *What is she doing now?* he wondered. Did she miss him as much as he missed her?

I'm sure she does, Venom assured him. **Besides, you're Deathbringer the sexy beast. How could she not?**

The nightwing couldn't help but chuckle at that. "You know, you're strangely comforting for a black gooey alien."

Don't push it.

"Noted."

~~~~~~

"Hey Venom," Deathbringer said suddenly. "You wanna play Truth Serum?"

What is truth serum? The symbiote questioned.

"Well, its basically like Truth or Dare except... just the truths."

That's dumb, why wouldn't you just play Truth or Dare?

"I don't know, maybe because they're physically the same being?"
~~~~~~

That's just stupid.

"Do you wanna play or not?"

No.

"Oh come on, what, you afraid I'm gonna expose your dirty little secrets?"

Venom sighed. **Fine. Deathbringer, what is your biggest fantasy involving Glory?"**

"... You're right, it's a stupid game anyway."

~~~~~~

"No, you cannot eat the staff," Deathbringer told the symbiote. They had this conversation before, but Venom just kept bringing it up!

But they're so nosy! The klyntarian whined. **And I know that we get extra large meals, but come on, Deathbringer! I need organs!**

"Then we can go hunting!" he said dismissively.

It'll take tons of small animals to makes up for a single dragon organ! he argued.

"We talked about this!" the nightwing growled. "You're a good guy now. You can't go around eating people!"

Venom started to say something, but cut himself off. He couldn't make that threat of *if I dont get organs from other dragons, I'll get them from you* cause well... Venom *was* his organs now!

You're so unfair... I don't wanna hurt anybody, I just wanna eat them!J

~~~~~~

Day 100, and the framework for all of the buildings were done. Installation of walls and electrical were beginning, and estimated to

take about 50 days. However, to his dismay, Deathbringer's responsibilities were not finished. You see, after the interior was done, Deathbringer would be expected to build the exterior, such as the bricks and concrete.

That job would be easier but... well... he missed Glory. He thought that he was done, but not only was there more work to do, he had to wait for other people to do their job...

Hopefully he could convince Queen Ruby to let him visit Glory while he was waiting... but did she even want to see him?

~~~~~~

The answer was no. Glory didn't want to see him. He sent her a letter, she didn't respond for two weeks, then sent him a short note basically saying she was too busy.

She's just busy with trying to put the kingdom together, Venom had told him, but Deathbringer knew the real reason. She was tired of him, she needed a break from him, and this is how she was doing it. 200 days probably wasn't even enough for her...

But that was fine, right? He just wanted her to be happy... he didn't want to fail her again...
~~~~~~

Sent From Above

Deathbringer had sent 10 letters to Glory in the previous weeks, and he had received 5 responses. He didn't think it would be so bad if even a single one invited him over, but no, every single one of them was telling him that she was far too busy to deal with him...

The more it happened, the less guilty he grew and angrier. But he was almost done anyway, so it didn't matter. He'd confront her at the end of the 200 Days...

Or so he thought.

Because it turns out that Glory had made an excuse for him to stay there. You see, he was to stay there for another 3 weeks to oversee the collection of the resources. So, he spent another month in the Sky Kingdom...

It took all of that for Deathbringer to realize something: it wasn't his fault, she just didn't want him anymore.

It was clear that he just didn't matter to her anymore... and... he was ok with that. It occurred to Deathbringer that he was doing the exact same thing he had done with his mother, put her on a pedestal so that whenever she messed up, he blamed himself. But in actuality, it wasn't his fault, it was hers.

But he couldn't help but feel excited, because today was his last day in the Sky Kingdom. After being gone for nearly a year, he was finally going back to the rainforest. How much had changed since he had last been there?

Well, however much it had changed, it wasn't the only one. Since being in the Sky Kingdom, Deathbringer has had a lot of time to get used to his new various abilities. For example, Deathbringer could now create and control tentacles without Venom's help. Not just that, but skills like his omnidirectional awareness (some kind of innate ability to see in all directions at once), was now much easier

to activate, and to handle whenever he did.

This came in useful when his entire body froze, and he focused on a female skywing who was striding through the streets, not a care in the world.

"What is it?" Deathbringer whispered, not wanting to draw attention to himself.

That Skywing is a Nightmare Operative, her name is Z-20, I believe you've met before.

The nightwing remembered the name. She had been guarding the Nightmare Base when he had first met Foxy... But before her scales had been torn and bloody... but... now she was somewhat attractive.

Don't go getting any non-Disney ideas, Deathbringer.

"I like my women how I like my milkshakes, thick."

You're a menace.

The nightwing chuckled before getting back to the problem at hand. "What is she doing here?" he asked, watching her through eyes on the back of his head as she entered a bar.

Well, I believe there's only one way to find out.

Deathbringer hesitated, but the choice was made for him as he was pulled into the bar by his symbiote. A live band played music, though judging by their playing, the band members were also hammered.

The moment he entered the bar, he felt her eyes on him. She was skilled. Had he not had enhanced instincts, he would never have been able to tell she was looking at him. Barely any of her eyes were visible, and she kept checking on him with subtle movements that could be easily mistaken for drunken sways or looking at the band.

He walked up and sat next to her directly. "That's quite a bit more

direct than I was expecting..." she mused.

"I felt your eyes on me the moment I entered. No point in being coy," he figured.

"Well you could've at least humored me," she whined, chuckling. "Well, are you gonna buy me a drink?"

"If I do, will you answer a few questions?" Deathbringer asked slyly, and she giggled.

"I might," she said, sizing him up with a smirk. "Though... maybe after... you'd give me something else to seal the deal?" She walked her talon over to his and began feeling up his arm. Where she touched, Deathbringer could feel his skin crawl with anticipation.

"**Absolutely not,**" Venom answered for him, pulling the nightwing's arm away. The moment he did, he felt that feeling vanish.

"Oh come on," she whined. "Think about how much fun we used to have..."

"You two knew each other?" Deathbringer asked.

"Well of course!" she said. "He didn't tell you?"

"No, he conveniently left that part out when he told me to follow you," the nightwing observed with a smirk. The symbiote simply grumbled in his head.

"Well, if I must," she said. "*I* was his host whenever he wasn't on missions. Oh, the things he could do when he was in complete control... then, we had a little... falling out..."

"As in you helped kill my son," the klyntarian growled, and Deathbringer was suddenly very interested in his own talons.

"And our relationship was never quite the same," she said with a sigh. "Well, I guess it can't be helped... but come on, Deathbringer, I can tell that you're much more reasonable than him. What do you say?"

She reached up to touch Deathbringer's face, and he nearly leaned into it. There was something about her. Her eyes, her face, her body. He wanted it...

But Venom pulled away, and again that feeling vanished. It didn't take the nightwing long to determine that there was some kind of aura about this dragoness that... seduced dragons around her. Now that he was paying attention, he saw its effect. Everyone in the bar seemed to be either glancing at her or just staring at her with lusting eyes. Some eyes were on him, looks of jealousy and even resentment.

She had the entire bar wrapped around her finger, and she hadn't said a single word to them.

"Thanks, but no thanks," the assassin told her, standing up. "Enjoy your drink."

He turned to leave, but her tail slithered up his neck. "I won't take no for an answer darling," she informed him seductively. "if I want something, I'll have it. And what I want is for you and I to *go to a secluded spot in the sky kingdom and--"*

It took everything he had to pull away from her tail. "First time for everything," he told her. He felt her eyes on him all the way out the bar.

That was badass.

"Really? I thought so but wasn't so sure," Deathbringer admitted. He had felt pretty cool overcoming whatever seductive power she had, saying a one-liner, then exiting. He smirked. "So, you and Z-20?"

I will stop your heart again, the symbiote threatened, which stopped the teasing but did nothing to stop the onslaught of giggles that soon followed.

"Do I even have a heart that you can stop anymore?" the nightwing questioned.

Of course, you do. Your body works just the same as any normal dragon... except it's made from me, he explained.

"And what about when I shapeshift?" he asked, realizing he had a lot more questions than he had thought originally. For a while, he had just... accepted the fact that Venom was a part of him now, but Deathbringer had never stopped to think exactly how that was possible.

Well... you're kinda like an octopus, except that you have bones, just don't need them, the klyntarian responded thoughtfully. **However... I have recently discovered that I cannot get rid of your organs.**

"Well go figure," he responded sarcastically.

What I mean is, he responded irritably. **Symbiotes don't need internal organs to survive. All we need is to eat, and a host to survive. But it seems like ever since bonding with your soul... my body began to make a host *for itself*...**

Deathbringer considered this for a moment. "So essentially, I have all of the weaknesses as a normal dragon?"

Well, a normal dragon can't move their organs around, Venom pointed out. **Or turn their bones to mush if someone tries to break them. Or heal fatal damage done to them.**

"Good point," he acknowledged with a smile.

Then, he saw it. Out of the alley he just passed, someone poked their head out out of an alleyway behind him, watching him with bright red eyes. The rightwing stopped for a moment, and as soon as he did, his stalker retreated back into the alleyway. "Venom?" he whispered.

I saw it, the symbiote assured him. **Just keep walking. They'll show themselves soon enough.**

Deathbringer nodded and continued his way forward, making sure to check every alley before he passed it. Surely they wouldn't make a move with all of... where were the dragons? The nightwing stopped once again to observe his surroundings. Where... where was he? He was in a part of the Sky Kingdom he had never even been

before, and he guessed no one had been here in years. Buildings were broken, some sinking into the ground on lousy foundation... what had happened?

Dammit! Venom cursed. **How did I not notice?**

"What?" Deathbringer asked, clueless. That thing from before was still watching him, he could feel it.

Z-20 is a special kind of succubus, designed by the Nightmares using inspiration from the creatures in the BATIM Experiment, the klyntarian explained. **She takes the form of someone from that dimension and using that and her magic to draw in creatures around her. She's an enchantress. I tried to resist her, but she must've gotten something in without me noticing!**

Deathbringer thought about their interaction. *"Go to a secluded spot in the sky kingdom,"* she had said, and even just thinking about them sparked the urge to keep walking. She had worked it in so seamlessly... and yet, thinking back on it, he remembered a feeling overcoming him in the moment...

"Ooooh, Deathy," her voice called, and when he turned, she was sauntering up behind him. "I told you, sweetheart, I don't take no for an answer."

"What's her deal?" Deathbringer whispered.

She's an enchantress, she's always gotten her way, Venom explained. **When she doesn't... she throws a fit... a BIG fit...**

"Noted," the nightwing acknowledged, turning his attention back to Emerald. "Look, I don't want any trouble, but I'm not for sale."

"Who says I'm *buying* anything?" she asked. "Come on, Deathbringer. Why don't we just *have some fun, with no-"*

"Nah, I'm good actually," he assured her. *That* time he felt it... The entire world had devolved to nothing but a distraction from her and Deathbringer's wildest desires, and after breaking free he felt like he needed a shower.

The skywing's face twitched in annoyance for a moment, before she returned to her carefree attitude. "Come on, Deathy, don't be so uptight."

Every time she said that name, it made the nightwing twitch. Glory was the only one who called him that. "I told you I'm not interested."

The next few seconds happened very quickly. He made the mistake of locking eyes with her, and immediately Deathbringer felt her influence. It wasn't a gnawing at his brain, it wasn't her asserting her will over his... it was something much more simple.

For a moment, his logical brain was done away with, and he wanted her to come closer. By the time he was able to force his rationality back into play, she was in front of him, caressing his face, sending more of that euphoric feeling into his body. That bliss that would be so easy to give into.

"I can tell," she assured him. "You want to give in, so do it... just do it, Deathbringer... I'm sure Glory won't mind sharing..."

He couldn't resist any longer. He was slipping into her control... no, it wasn't her control. It was his own primal instincts that she was allowing to take control of him. He had to do something. So, with what little strength he had, he lashed out. The nightwing's claws barely had enough time to ball into fists before they shot forward and collided with her face.

He had no qualms about hitting women if he was under attack, but he was still a gentledragon! "Sorry milady," Deathbringer said after regaining his composure. "But as I said... I... am... not..."

He trailed off as he felt something sticky on his talon, and when he looked down, he nearly puked. A large chunk of the scales on Emerald's face had been torn off with the punch, and was now stuck to his talon. He yelped and waved his hand rapidly to get it off. *I didn't hit her that hard, did I?* the assassin panicked.

Don't be such a baby, Venom snarled. **You hit her hard, but her face came off because it's already dead flesh. Would start to**

decompose anyway.

"You..." Z-20 snarled, her voice no longer sounding sweet. It rasped with every word and gargled and with every other. "You idiot... That was the most beautiful skin I've found in my time in the Nightmares!"

She began to rip herself free from that skin, twisting and turning to reveal... oh moons above what was that?!

The skin underneath was not only leathery, but somehow slimy at the time. It oozed with a viscous black liquid that made Deathbringer want to wash his hands just from looking at it. And her teeth... there were no lips (except for two strands of skin connecting the top and bottom jaw that almost seemed to be melted) to cover those oversized, misshapen teeth that somehow seemed to be pearly white apart from the strange mucus. Her own horns sprouted from her head, and there was some kind of circular object that had long merged with her skull...

And yet, the strangest part was that these features only seemed to cover half of her face. The other half was silky smooth, with gorgeous brown eyes and full lips that devolved into the cheekless teeth the further right it went.

The rest of her body was a mess, most of it that leathery skin while others were silky smooth, as if her own body couldn't decide.

"Venom, what the hell is she?" Deathbrnger question, petrified.

She... was originally marked as a defect for... obvious reasons, Venom explained, seeming flustered himself. **But after seeing how strong her abilities were, they came up with that compromise of taking over other bodies. As I said, they took inspiration from the BATIM Experiments...**

"Draconic, please!" the nightwing urged as Z-20 roared.

Deathbringer... meet AA93. Alice Angel.

~~~~~~
~~~~~~

Soooooo... It sure has been a while since I uploaded huh? But I have a good reason... I... am lazy.

School has been a lot, and I try to write whenever I have spare time but... you know... doesn't really work out. But! Here it is! With my own interpretation of Alice Angel! Obviously I took some... creative liberties when writing her, but she's not your traditional Alice Angel. She was based on Alice Angel, and modified for the Nightmare's purposes... however, their experiments have a track record of failing, and this was the result!

Praise, criticism, feedback, and memes are all welcome!

That Wasn't Very Cash Money Of You

"Alice Angel," Deathbringer echoed. How was this... thing, Alice *ANGEL?*

I know right? Quite the ironic name for someone who looks like the spawn of the devil, Venom retorted, and had the nightwing not been paralyzed with terror, he would have made a snarky comment. Probably scolding the symbiote, saying *Hey! Remember, all bodies are beautiful.*

But Alice Angel was already looking at him with hateful eyes. Which is definitely a generous statement considering she only had one real eyes, and the other was just a black hole in her face where that black slime oozed from.

"You stupid little fool!" she hissed. "How dare you!"

This had been her chance, to be beautiful just like the others... and Deathbringer had robbed that from her! Tore off her face with a punch when all she wanted was to have a good time! To enjoy her new form! Even if she were to try and keep the body, there would still a scar...

And scars are not beautiful.

Inky tentacles shot towards Deathbringer, impaling the ground as the nightwing flipped out of the way. He shot forward, balling his claws to a fist and punching Alice Angel in the stomach. The moment he did, however, his talon went right through her, and the hole he made sealed right back up.

She's made of liquid, Venom told him. **We can't beat her with physical attacks!**

"So how do we beat her?" he wondered. Puss began to seep from

Alice's skin, collecting on the ground. Suddenly, it shot toward him with surprising speed in the shape of a cartoon arrow. As soon as Deathbringer dodged it, in true cartoon fashion: it stopped, turned, and shot at him a second time.

"What is this thing?!" the rightwing roared as he flipped through the air in a desperate attempt to dodge the projectile. After it rocheted about 3 times, it finally seemed to wear itself down, hitting a wall before disintegrating.

None of her attack follow normal physics, Venom explained. **I don't have time to explain what a cartoon is, so just expect nothing to make sense!**

Deathbringer began to retort, but was forced to shut up and fight as Alice lept toward him with a scythe, burying it into the ground. "Well, fire should work, right?" Deathbringer questioned, pulling up the flames from within him. Just as he exhaled however, it tore his throat apart, black goop falling from his disintegrating neck.

Are you insane?! Venom roared as the wounds healed. The nightwing ducked another swing from the scythe. **Symbiotes are weak to fire!**

"Then how am I supposed to beat her?" Deathbringer wondered. Judging from the laziness of her attacks, it seemed like she didn't fight often. Given her abilities, she probably specialized in undercover operations and would never need to get her hands dirty. Under any other circumstance, he would easily be able to beat her. However, since physical attacks didn't hurt her, and his only form of energy projection was now his weakness...

"We need to find other fire..." he reasoned.

Careful! Don't let anyone see you! Venom reminded him. And so Deathbringer took into the air, thinking that at least would keep him somewhat safe even if he flew low. Wrong. Alice Angel sprouted wings of her own made of that substance and took to the air. Now, Deathbringer was no scientist...

But what the fu--

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Glory roared, throwing her books off of her desk before slamming her fists down, breaking it in half. It had been nearly a year since Deathbringer had left. While she had made some serious progress with the kingdom and telling the other queens about the situation (or at least the half-truths she came up with), she had been miserable while doing it. Every time one of his letters came, she would write a response detailing how much she missed him and needed him back. Then, she take a look around her room and in the mirror. Both were a mess.

She had questioned Foxy a few times, whenever her sanity was enough to do so. So naturally, she had only questioned him 3 times so far. She knew that it was dangerous without backup, but in all honesty, she didn't backup would really help considering Twisted's abilities.

And he had been surprisingly cooperative so far, answering most of her questions. Of course, she didn't really know if he was being as helpful as he seemed, as there was no way to verify his statements. But the little bit that she *could* verify was true. For example, he had told her that the Nightmares had been on Pyrrhia for hundreds of years. Glory had opted to check the history books, in which she did find evidence of strange creatures that resembled Twisted.

Other than the kingdom, the other thing that she had been looking into were mystics. She had that vision of Foxy, and it had played out almost exactly as she had envisioned it, despite being oblivious to the Nightmares' existence. Nightwing/rainwing relationships were rare, even before the war, and even if she *did* happen to have some kind of nightwing lineage, she was raised under the mountain, unexposed to any of the three moons.

Glory had been utterly stumped until she had remembered something Lefte had told her before he left. She had been telling him about her vision, wondering what it meant. Suddenly, an idea seemed to strike him. He had begun muttering as he thought to himself, and Glory could only make out certain parts of it. "... contact with the crystal?... non-specific... can't rule it out... may grow stronger... like me?"
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Glory had tried to press him on it, but he had told her that he would tell her when he came back. He had neglected to mention until the very last moment, however, that he'd be gone several years. However, from the bit of his muttering that the rainwing had been able to decipher, there was a high chance that he believed Glory was a mystic. Why else would he have said "like me?" She doubted that he believed the queen was a bear, and nothing else she could think of was relevant to the situations.

But then, if she really was a mystic, and an inherit ability that mystics had were visions of the future, then why hadn't she had any more? The only dreams that she had nowadays were of her fight with Twisted and Deathbringer's death, and while they were just as devastating each time, they were nothing new.

All day today she had been researching. Glory had completely cleared her schedule, hoping to find some answers. She had found absolutely nothing. 13 hours of research down the drain for nothing! She breathed heavily over her destroyed desk, half-expecting Deathbringer to come up and comfort her; to say something smart so she could yell at him, and he'd just smirk and get her angrier but also somehow calm her down in the end?

It didn't make any sense, and yet that's how those kinds of interactions always went. If it were anyone else in a moment as heated as this one, she would've melted their face off. But there was something special about Deathbringer that, now that she thought about it, was there since they first met. Why else would Glory have spared him when he attacked them and Blaze? Or allowed him to become her bodyguard? She didn't know what that *something* was that made him so special, but whatever it was, she missed it.

He hadn't sent her a letter since she had extended his assignment, and she knew she messed up. Usually, she'd recieve letters from him every week. Now, it had been 4 and he hadn't said anything. Part of her was glad to not feel that overwhelming sense of guilt every time he sent a letter, but the rest of her considered what this might mean. What if he came back and he decided he didn't need her? What if he decided that he didn't want to be her bodyguard anymore?

She dragged her claws down the broken desk, before taking a deep breath. She honestly didn't have the energy to worry. She tried to clear her mind and only think about the good things in her life, but those were getting harder and harder to come by lately. *It's okay...* she tried to convince herself. She was going to talk to Deathbringer when he got back. Surely he'd understand... right?

She looked out her window at the setting sun, and as she picked up the books she threw, she wondered what Deathbringer was doing...

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Attention all workers!" Deathbringer said over the intercom, ducking a swing from Alice's scythe and kicking her back. "Evacuate the area immediately."

When pondering where they could get fire to kill Alice, he had only been able to think of one place: the royal forge. He hadn't seen it up close, as Venom had refused to go in, but if he knew anything about forges, that was where he wanted to be. He wasn't sure if there was anybody working at this time of day, but he didn't want to take any risks. He had to maneuver to come in through the opposite side of the compound so he could get to the intercom. The bright side: he only had to knock out one guy to get there!

Now that the workers had evacuated, all he had to do was find something he could burn Alice with... while also avoiding anything and everything that could burn him... easy!

"Don't you get it?!" she screamed, throwing her scythe at him which he barely managed to dodge. "I need you! So that I can be beautiful, again!"

Deathbringer cringed. "Being beautiful--" he tried but was cut off as the scythe dragged itself along the wall at the nightwing once again.

"Don't try to tell me being beautiful isn't important!" she roared a tentacle managing to grab hold of the bodyguard's ankle, pulling him upside-down. "I see you with your polished scales, perfect horns, muscular figure!"
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Thanks for the compliments," he joked uneasily.

"You were born beautiful!" she roared, slamming him into the ground. "You'll always be beautiful! And you'll never know what it's like not to be!"

Deathbringer summoned blades in his claws, twirling around and cutting the the tentacle before landing on his feet. "Guess it's just in my nature to be sexy," he taunted, before leaping back as she brought a giant hammer onto the ground.

Great, you got her even more angry, Venom said sarcastically. **I'm sure it will work in your favor.**

"Ever heard of strategy, Venom?" the nightwing teased. "Now, she's less likely to consider what our plan is!"

And she's also gonna try harder to kill us, the symbiote pointed out.

"Well, you can't have everything," Deathbringer reasoned. "Here it is!"

Deathbringer lept through the door, before tentacles yanked him back to the door. **Oh hell no!** Venom protested. Alice then persuaded him to go further in... by punching him halfway across the factory. It was *hot* in there. An entire days' worth of heat stored inside of this relatively large warehouse, constantly being added to by molten metal and still-running forges.

This is a terrible idea! Venom panicked. **Alice is only weak to fire if she lit up! Symbiotes are weak to heat in general!**

Already, Deathbringer could feel his scales drooping a bit, his body becoming weaker. "Then we do it fast..." he concluded. "Just... have to figure out how..."

YOU DON'T KNOW?! Venom roared in his head. **YOU BROUGHT ME TO THE ONE PLACE WHERE FIRE IS EVERYWHERE, AND YOU'RE TELLING ME YOU DON'T KNOW?!**

"Relax!" the nightwing urged. "I'll figure something out!"

"It was stupid of you to come here!" Alice taunted. "Know your weakness'!"

Oh, I do, Deathbringer thought. *And I know yours too.*

All he had to do was find a source of fire that he could control... there! A chunk of metal was laying on an anvil, still partially red. He guessed it was supposed to be a sword, but right now it more so resembled a club with a slightly pointed edge. But it's level of completion didn't matter right now... it would need to be a lot hotter, but it should be enough!

The nightwing went to touch it, only to have Venom forcefully pull his hand away. **You're kidding! That's way too hot to touch!** he protested, and Deathbringer groaned as he kicked one of Alice's arrows into a large vat of molten steel.

"Stop being such a baby!" the nightwing demanded, before sighing. "Fine, I'll find something to touch it with!"

Alice suddenly tackled him, forcing his back against the side of a large vat of melted metal. He felt his scales instantly begin to melt. "Look what you made me do!" she screamed. "You're making me ruin that perfect body!"

With a roar of pain and effort, Deathbringer's hand shot up and smashed the chain holding the container up. The molten liquid splashed onto the other chain, causing that one to the break too, and the whole bucket tipped to the side, spilling its contents onto the two fighters. Deathbringer managed to avoid the brunt of it, although everything below his wings was completely burned away. His front legs soon followed as he pounced off the lava-covered floor, landing on some kind of storage rack.

"Did... did I do it?" Deathbringer questioned, only to receive his answer as a cartoon arrow pinned him to the wall. A large metal cocoon covered in black surrounded where Alice once was. "There's no way! How the hell did she survive that?"

He heard the metal clang, and Venom had only one thing to say.

Cartoon logic...

Alice broke free of the cocoon, her hands and half her face now covered in scrap metal. "YOU!" she screamed, and Deathbringer didn't wait. The moment his limbs healed, he lept off, finding another rack, and seeking shelter on that one.

There! Venom pointed out, and Deathbringer saw a pair of welding gloves, which he swifty took, putting one on before dodging another one of Alice's attacks. *Now just gotta make it back to that piece...* he thought, and it wasn't until then that he realized he was playing a dangerous game of The Floor is Lava. Most of the floor was now covered in molten steel, and if he touched it, it would be very difficult to recover.

The anvils, Deathbringer realized. He could jump between the anvils to get back to there... And so, he did. He sprinted across the factory, jumping between working stations before finally making it back to the metal piece he found earlier. He took it, and immediately stuck it into the forge. Because it had been active so long, it didn't take the flames long to make the metal red hot.

Just as he turned to face Alice again, a terrible sound pierced the air, and Venom screamed. Deathbringer huddled over, his body tearing itself apart as Alice dug her new metal nails into the the metal on the floor and dragged them along.

"You forget that I used to be Venom's host," Alice reminded him cockily, slowly sauntering up to him. "Did you think I would forget how to kill my boyfriend?"

He would've tried to make a witty comment, but his vocal cords were approaching his lower back. Alice began monologuing, but Deathbringer could barely even hear himself think over that horrible noise. He just had to find a way to burn her... but how could he do that when he could barely move?

Then, he saw it. The fuel tank underneath the forge... He didn't know how full or empty they were but... he had to try, right? As covertly as he could, he reached for the fuel tank. If Alice saw him now, it was over... Every inch he moved felt like a mile. Why was it

so far away? Couldn't it just move towards him just a little bit?

Finally, he grasped it, and with a roar of effort effort, hurled it at Alice who easily sidestepped it. "Was that really it?" she questioned as the tank lodged itself into another forge. "You may be pretty, honey, but quit while you're behind."

The tank exploded, triggering a chain reaction that caused the tanks connected to *that* forge the explode, the shockwaves causing the other nearby forges to explode. And it all went up in a glorious ball of fire.

Confessions

Today was the day.

Glory took a deep breath. She could see them, flying in from the horizon. This was the last trade group she had sent, meaning that Deathbringer would be returning with them. As much as she feared and dreaded facing him after sending him away for so long, she couldn't deny her excitement. She had missed him, that was no secret (as much as she tried to keep it one), and she wondered what it would be like to see him again.

A part of her still wished he was the same old Deathbringer as before. She wished that nothing had changed between them, and that they could go back to how they were before without anything changing between them... and yet... she knew that wasn't going to happen.

However, that did nothing to quell her excitement and joy as the large group of dragons landed in the supply center, where all the materials would be stored until they were sorted. Glory pushed through the crowd of tired dragons, looking for her long-lost bodyguard. In a sea of nightwings, she knew he'd stand out.

And stand out he did, but not for the reason she was exptecting.

Her smile widened, and she approached him swiftly. "Deathbringer," she called, only for him to turn, and her smile to fade. A large portion of his scales were rough as treebark, as if they had been burnt and then hardened over and over. "Moons above..."

And then, when he saw her, his face hardened. *Hardened.* She had never seen him look so angry before. The entire time she'd known him, every time he got super angry, he had always expressed it in a fit of raw emotion before laughing it off a moment later. This was cold and hard... *My anger,* she realized.

"Not now," he told her bluntly, looking away. "I have work to do..."

Glory cleared her throat and tried to regain her composure. "O-of course," she said. "Come meet me in my office after you're done. It'd be nice to catch up."

Deathbringer was silent for a hot minute, before sighing. "Alright," he told her, before going back to talking to the others.

You really gonna do her like that, huh? Venom questioned.

"Don't treat her like she's the victim," Deathbringer growled. "She sent me away for almost a year and refused to talk to me! Excuse me if I'm not exactly ready to welcome her back with open arms!"

Really? Cause I noticed that you only hardened when she saw your face.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Deathbringer woke up, his head spinning, body aching. What had happened? He had failed, hadn't he? The fuel tank had gone right by her... and then suddenly it was really hot. It took him several minutes before he could open his eyes, and another while before he could feel his limbs.

I warned you it was a bad idea, Venom grumbled, and Deathbringer had smirked and looked up at the sky.

"But it worked..." Deathbringer pointed out.

Yeah, it did, take a look at your work, superstar, the symbiote challenged, and he had. The entire armory was up in flames, smoke billowing into the sky. The fire had spread to the neary forest. **I barely managed to drag us up here before we were consumed by the flames!**

"Crap..." the nightwing groaned. He hadn't mean to cause such serious damage, he was just trying kill Alice Angel! "We... we should help put the fire out..."

And get closer to the fire? No! After today, I'm not going anywhere near fire ever again!
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Well... at least we managed to kill Alice..." Deathbringer pointed out. "Plus, we got away with nothing but a few little burns!"

Deathbringer, I can't heal us. It took the nightwing a good moment to fully process what the symbiote just said.

"What do you mean you can't heal?" he questioned frantically.

I used a lot of myself to heal during the fight, but I am a finite resource. Since we've been undereating, I didn't have a lot to spare. The explosion took so much out of me that I didn't have enough mass left to heal. So... I used a shortcut.

"What do you mean *shortcut?*" Deathbringer groaned as he stood.

Us symbiotes are incredibly energy efficient, so much so that allows us to cheat the system a bit. Only the most skilled and powerful symbiotes dare to do it, but I didn't have any other options. So... I used our organs as food, then regenerated them, then used them as food. I got a bit more out of it then what I was giving each time, and I continued this until I had enough to regenerate our body. But in order to get that bit of extra, I had to cut a few corners on the mass that I generated this way.

Deathbringer found a small body of water where a tiny stream seemed to end and looked at his reflection. "3 moons, Venom..." the nightwing gasped, touching the burnt and broken skin. It felt like charcoal.

Let that be a warning I guess, the symbiote told him. **To stop being so damn reckless. You're not indestructible.**

"This... isn't permanent... right?" he asked desperately. He told himself that he was over Glory, but a part of him still hoped that they might get back together one day... but if he looked like this...

No, it's not... but it may take a few months, maybe a year or two.

"A year? Venom, I can't look like this for a year!"

Then you shouldn't have gone and caused the explosion of the

century!

"You're the one who pressured me to investigate Alice!"

Well... yeah, that's fair.

"Can't you hide it or something? Put it on the inside?"

Oh yes, great idea, let's use the gentically flawed tissue to construct your vital organs, great idea Deathbringer, you should patent that.

In that moment, Deathbringer couldn't help but think about how Glory would react when she saw him. Part of him hoped she wouldn't be phased by it. That she'd just be happy to see him and ignore his scars. Then he'd know that nothing had changed between them.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Whatever," Deathbringer finally responded. "We'll talk to her when we meet in her office."

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Glory was in her room, tidying up. She had done so the day before, but already is was a mess again as if it had gone off on an epic adventure while she was gone. She knew that Deathbringer was angry with her but that was okay! She would make it up to him today!

She had some tea ready for him, and some flowers at her desk. A few minutes later, Deathbringer came into the room. "Hey, long time no see," she said warmly, to which he only responded with a nod. "I have some tea for you, if you'd like."

"Thank you," he said, sitting and sipping from the cup. Silence.

"So, how long has it been, almost a year?" she chuckled. "We have a lot to catch up on."

"And whose fault is that?" he muttered. Glory tensed.

"I... I apologize for sending you away for such a long time."

"I got used to it."

"What do you think of the new kingdom? It's still quite the work-in-progress but I think it's coming along nicely."

"Yeah, you got a lot done when you sent me away."

Glory sighed. She couldn't bear this any longer! "Deathbringer, please talk to me."

"It doesn't feel good, does it?" he questioned. "Feels like talking to a brick wall. Like it's some sort of automated response. Like every letter you send isn't even being considered, doesn't it?"

The queen looked down. "I'm sorry..." she told him. "I was... I was working through something, and I didn't know what to do."

"You could've called me, and I'd work through it with you. Like we always do, remember?"

"I didn't want to see you," she blurted, and immediately realized her mistake.

"Well, nice to hear the truth," he said, standing up.

"No, Deathbringer, please don't leave," she begged him, but he was already walking out the door. She thought of all those times he stayed with her when she couldn't sleep, the nights he watched over her when she could. She remembered them laughing all the night as they told jokes at Tsunami's expense. She imagined losing that now, and her entire being panicked. "STOP!"

The door that Deathbringer had just opened slammed shut, and no matter how hard he pulled he could not get it to open that way. Tears came to Glory's eyes.

"I'm sorry..." she said, trying to keep the sobs from escaping. "I sent you away because you were different from before, and I thought that you were the problem! But I regretted it every second of every day! I read all of your letters!" She pulled out a drawer on her desk

and pulled out a box. "I still have them, and I read them all the time! And I wanted to see you, but I didn't want you to see me because..." she broke into sobs. "Because I'm a fucking mess, Deathbringer! But I don't want to be a mess without you..."

Deathbringer was stunned, completely still and silent as he watched the woman he loved cry. All this time... all this time when he had blamed her, he was mad at her and her Queenly duties... she had felt the same way... she had never hated him, and she had never stopped wanting him... she hated herself...

Slowly, he found himself approaching her. He took her talons in his and looked into her eyes. "Glory..." he said firmly. "You are the first queen to rule over two tribes. You saved the entire nightwing tribe from extiction. You stopped a war that many thought would last forever! You survived that time under the mountain. And you saved me when I didn't think I'd be saved..."

"Deathbringer..."

"Please... let me finish. Glory, from the second I met you, I knew that you were special. I could never name it, but it was always there. Like that time that I thought I was going to die in the volcano, but then you came and saved me. And then, I became your bodyguard because... because I was afraid of losing you. Glory, I knew you were special, but I never knew how much you would change my life. And then I was stupid enough to lose you anyway!"

"No, it's--"

"It is my fault, because I didn't realize you were hurting!" he insisted. "I should've... I should've seen it sooner, that you were hurting, but I was too selfish."

"Deathbringer, please--"

"No, I need to get this off my chest," he took a deep breath. "You've never taken me seriously when I've said this before, but... I have feeling for you, Glory. I have feelings for you that I've had for too long to count! And I just need to tell you--"

"Deathbringer, shut up," Glory managed to laugh through her tears. "I love you too..."

And then, she kissed him. A moment that he had dreamed of for years, always considering it as an impossibilty. But in that moment, when her snout met his, everything went away. It felt like nothing mattered, and nothing ever would matter again as long as they were together. As long as they loved one another, nothing would ever be able to ruin them.

They both had little nightmares within themselves... and that's why they loved eachother.

Why Does Something Bad Happen Whenever There's Wholesomeness?

Deathbringer and Glory had been together for almost 3 months. There was no more denying it. At first, they had tried to keep it a secret from everyone but their closest friends. Besides, how would the continent react to a queen of 2 tribes also the first queen with a public inter-tribal relationship? But of course, you know how those things go. One person finds out, and they tell their friends and they tell their friends and soon everyone knows and it's in the newspaper. Then, there were all the questions. "Is Deathbringer the King?" "Are you still Queen?" "Can we be expecting a dragonet soon?" "You better not have gotten Glory pregnant, or I will eat you!" Ok, that last one was Clay. What can they say? He's their Bigwings.

But now, they left all of that drama behind for just a day. They took a walk on the beach. Glory liked the beach, though she would never admit it to Tsunami. She liked the way the sand felt between her talons. Deathbringer however, felt exactly the opposite. He felt that the beach had too little traction, and there were weird creatures, and it was too squishy. But he put up with it, because he knew Glory loved the beach, and as long as she was happy, he was happy.

"Deathbringer, do you ever think about what life would be like if I weren't Queen?" she asked him suddenly. "Like... if we'd be the same people or... even be together...?"

"I'm gonna stop you right there," Deathbringer told her with his signature smirk, walking up to his queen. "Because When I fell in love with you, you were just some Rainwing pretending to be an Icewing. Do you remember that day?"

Glory chuckled slightly. "One of the worst days of my life," she joked.

Deathbringer tried his best to imitate Glory. "You are, without a doubt, the worst assassin I've ever heard of."

Glory laughed and imitated Deathbringer, adding a little wink. "But you *have* heard of me."

They both laughed. Deathbringer rubbed the side of Glory's face. "You are so beautiful."

"Meh, you're pretty average, yourself," she responded, her scales turning pink. Deathbringer gasped and clutched his chest as if he'd been stabbed.

"My queen, you wound me!" he declared dramatically.

"Serves you right for daring to gaze upon her majesty."

"Ah yes, nothing but a delinquent..." he said, walking towards the water. Glory eyed him suspiciously as his tail shapeshifted. "In fact, I am such a delinquent, I'd dare to do this!"

He brought his tail around, which was shaped like a bucket. He scooped up water and threw it all at her as she squealed, attempting to block it with her wing. The nightwing laughed hysterically as Glory glared at him, her scales turning red. "Oh, you are so dead!"

Deathbringer launched into the air, Glory right on his heels. "Get back here!" she roared playfully.

"I can't! I gotta make my *glorious* escape!" he cackled. Glory chased Deathbringer around the beach, then through the mountains. They laughed the whole way until Deathbringer sat to rest on a mountain, thinking he'd lost her. The next moment, she tackled him, making them tumble through the grass until they came to a stop with Glory on top. The rainwing grinned.

"Did I just beat a trained assassin?" she questioned teasingly.

"Who let you beat him?" Deathbringer asked with his smirk. "Yes."

Glory chuckled slightly and kissed Deathbringer, and they laid there for a moment, just being content to be near one another.

"Ahem," The queen looked up to see Anemone above them. "Am I interrupting something?"

Glory quickly got off of Deathbringer and tried her best to look regal. Deathbringer got up and sat by Glory's side as Anemone landed in front of them, looking regal as ever.

"Hello Glory," Anemone said. "Long time no see."

"Anemone," she greeted. "To what do I owe this pleasure?"

"I'm not sure if you heard, but my mother passed away 9 days ago due to disease. I am the queen of the seawings now."

"Yes, I heard and am very sorry for your loss," Glory said, though she couldn't help but worry about Anemone's age. She was only 5 now, wasn't she? She would have no problem defending the kingdom with the help of her magic, but how about running a kingdom? *She seems pretty professional right now...* Glory considered. *Maybe she learned her lesson after Darkstalker?*

"Since then... Turtle, and I have made a lot of renovations. Anyway, I need to speak to you." Anemone's body did something weird when she said Turtle. She stiffened as if she expected some kind of allergic reaction to the word.

"Of course," Glory agreed. "We could set up a meeting--"

"I meant right now. Both of you," Anemone demanded, reaching out her talons which were decorated with beautiful gold bracelets. "One of these bracelets allows me to teleport wherever I wish. I'll take you to the palace."

"Oh... um, well..." Glory didn't know if she could say 'actually, today is my day off, so...'

"It's urgent," she assured the queen. "You're gonna wanna hear about it."

Glory took Anemone's talon, and hesitantly, Deathbringer did the same. Anemone closed her eyes, and they felt a million butterflies brush against their scales. They all closed their eyes as the feeling

closed in around them. Glory felt Deathbringer's talon disappear from hers, and she tried to reach for him, but she couldn't move. For a moment she panicked, wondering if something had gone wrong. Suddenly, the feeling stopped, and Glory felt rock underneath her. She opened her eyes, and Anemone was in front of her, Deathbringer was to her left, looking like he was about to throw up. The seawing looked at Glory in a way that clearly said: *really? This guy?*

"Since I became queen, I've made some extreme security upgrades. I have a map that highlights everything living. It's been quite useful for knowing where to hunt, but nothing too surprising... Until 2 days ago."

Anemone led them to a large room with an enormous blue wall, about 24x21 meters, with moving green splotches. In the center of the room, there was a pedestal with a small desk with a circular rock in the middle. Anemone walked up to it and turned to rock, causing the screen to move. She turned the rock upwards to the right for about 10 seconds, before a humungous black shape appeared. It took up about 2/3 of the screen.

"That thing appeared 2 days ago and has been slowly moving towards Pyhrria. Nobody knows what it is. We have sent scouts out to investigate it, but they disappeared on the radar as soon as they got close to it."

"How big is it?" Deathbringer asked.

"We've estimated it to be about 112km in diameter," Anemone explained. "Bigger than anything we've ever seen."

There's nothing in the Nightmare's arsenal that big.

"Do you have any more information on this?" Glory asked.

"Turtle did figure something out," Anemone said. "He studied a fish that had been near the thing and concluded that... I kid you not, that the mass was made of some kind of ink."

That explains it.

"Why do you think we'd know anything about about this?" Glory asked suspiciously, and the seawing queen just stared at her.

"I know about Venom," she told them. "As a queen, I'm not gonna have anyone else keeping secrets, right? So, I also made something that would tell me all the secrets of the queens."

"What?" Glory exclaimed, appalled. "Anemone, that is a massive invasion of privacy!"

"And keeping a group of interdimensional terrorists a secret from the rest of Pyrrhia isn't a breach of trust?" the seawing questioned, before sighing. "Turtle already made me get rid of it, so calm down."

"So you already know about me?" Venom questioned, and Anemone's eyes widened. Seeing it in person was completely different from viewing it through an object. But, she managed to regain her composure.

"Yes," she said, trying to sound confident. "And I came to you asking for help, so do you have information or not?"

"First of all, watch your tone, pipsqueak," the symbiote warned. **"Second, the mass on that screen is ink, and controlling that ink, is the Ink Demon, better known as Bendy. He was originally from Dimension 8AT1M247 and was re-engineered by the Nightmares to be more powerful. He can manipulate ink at will, as well as summon more of it under special circumstances. My guess is that he has the ink machine totem, which allows him to summon as much ink as he would like."**

"Alright..." Anemone said, still slightly wounded from being called pipsqueak. "Well, then how do we kill it?"

Venom was silent for a moment, and Deathbringer groaned. "Please don't tell me you told us all that just to say we can't kill it..."

"Fine," Venom responded. **"I'll tell them instead. There are currently no known ways to kill it, although, there are quite a few ways proven successful in making him retreat."**

"Come on and get to the point already" the seawing urged.

"Alright, calm down, booster-seat," Venom teased. **"In terms of the counters that you have access to, really, you all only have one choice."**

"Well, then, what is it?" Glory asked curiously.

"An eraser," Venom said, snickering. Glory sighed, resting her head in her talons as she tried not to laugh at such an unworthy joke. Anemone clenched her fist and teeth.

"I wanna kill him..." she stated.

"Yeah, go ahead and try armrest."

"I GET IT! I'M SMALL! GIVE IT A REST!" Anemone screamed, and Venom smirked.

"Yeah, sure thing Danny Devito. Anyway , seriously. One way to deal with him is fire. Ink is flammable. Though you will need quite a bit of fire, and it's gotta be hot."

Anemone and Glory looked at each other and agreed in unison. "Peril."

"Due to his size, as well as the recent developments that I'm aware of even Peril isn't enough to Another method, while only temporary, is ice. Ink is a liquid, and therefore can be frozen. It will only work for a little while though because he knows how to escape, so keep him REALLY cold. When do you expect him to arrive?"

"Judging by the speed he's going," Anemone said. "I'd say we have about 2 weeks."

"You may want to warn people to get out of their homes and come onto land. Ink is very toxic in your bloodstream and could kill, cause blindness if it gets in your eye, or destroy your gills."

"3 palaces abandoned in 2 generations. That has to be some kind of

record," Anemone said. Since the Summer palace was trashed and abandoned, they had used Anemone's and Turtle's power to create a new one. This one was a lot bigger and was designed with a kill switch that deactivated all animus powers in and around the castle. But now, that one was about to be destroyed too.

"**We can set up a coast guard, all wearing animus armor, perhaps you and Turtle could help with that."**

The seawing stiffened again and looked down. "T-Turtle's not here..." she said.

"What do you mean?" Glory asked worriedly, and Anemone just huffed.

"Turtle went missing," she stated, her voice shaking. "He was in his room one day, and then he was just... gone. There were signs of a violent struggle."

Glory wrapped her wings around Anemone and comforted her. Deathbringer looked at the black shape on the map. He watched as parts of it reached out like tentacles, before coming re-entering the mass of black ink.

"I just want my siblings back," Anemone said and began sobbing into Glory's shoulder. Glory hugged her. Deathbringer moved off to the side where he was sure they couldn't hear him. "Who were the hosts?"

Ex-squeeze me?

"Carnage and Riot. Who were the hosts?"

Are you really still on that?

"Answer the question."

There was a plan on exactly who was going to infect who when. Riot was a random Rainwing named Mist.

"And Carnage?"

I don't know.

"What do you mean?"

I found out my son was alive at the same time you did.

"Was it Tsunami?"

Not likely. Someone as defiant as she is would be harder to take over.

"What if she was compatible? Like you and me?"

Nearly impossible. On average there's only 1 compatible being every 231 dimensions.

"But still possible?"

Let it go.

"You two havin' fun over there?" Glory teased.

"Not really," the nightwing huffed in annoyance. "He's being very difficult..."

As Glory began to speak, Anemone cleared her throat. "I see only one thing to do..." she said. "We must mount a full-scale attack on Bendy. We rally as many dragons as possible and destroy him as soon as he emerges from the water."

"That would result in significant casualties," Glory protested. "Even if there was some way to guarantee the lives of the soldiers, it would still mean revealing the truth about the Nightmares!"

"Couldn't you just animus enchant it away?" Deathbringer offered, only for Venom to answer. **"No. The Nightmares have been studying animus magic since they've been here. Most of their soldiers are immune to it."**

"The Nightmares sure do have a lot of time on their hands if they make stuff that advanced..." Anemone mumbled.

"They've been around since near the beginning of time, so yeah, I guess you could say we've had some prep time," Venom smirked.

"We need to call an emergency meeting between the queens..." Glory decided with a sigh. "But still, how can we convince them to fight without telling them about the Nightmares?"

"Just blame it on a past animus," the symbiote suggested.

"I think it would make things easier if the queens knew," Deathbringer pointed out. "Even if we hid this from them, we're eventually gonna need their help in the future. I seriously doubt that this will be the Nightmare's last assault..."

Glory hummed in thought. "You know, I think you're right..." the rainwing queen considered. "We tell the queens about the Nightmares, but to the rest of the citizens, they are facing an animus threat..."

She hesitated. Was it okay to lie to these dragons that would potentially be giving up their lives for this cause? Lefte's words kept repeating in her head, reminding her that if she did tell everyone about the situation at hand, it would spell out the end of Pyrrhia...

"Anemone, I need you to call a meeting of the queens at our usual location," the rainwing commanded. All the queens had an enchanted device that, when activated, would contact all of the queens, giving them 15 minutes to prepare before being teleported to a meeting room of the user's choice. Glory had lost hers when they fled the palace, but Anemone should have their own. "We're going to tell them about the Nightmares, and instruct them not to tell anyone else. Deathbringer, I need you to go back to the kingdom and debrief them. Only volunteers will fight. Nobody should be forced to, understand?"

Deathbringer nodded. Something flew in from the right and landed in Anemone's hand. "Queens have been notified," she told them, the golden button flying away to put itself back. "I will gather my armies. Should I teleport you to your Kingdom?"

"Yes please," Glory said, and in a moment, she was in her room again, next to Deathbringer. She looked at him for a moment, then smiled. "So much for a day off, right?"

Not Cash Money At All

[image]

Deathbringer looked over the list of things he and Glory had created for him to bring up during the briefing. He looked over it and sighed at how little they knew about Bendy. According to Venom, the last time the symbiote had seen the ink demon, it had but nothing but a prototype. Not only this but he was never meant to be used for this mission.

"Is this really all we know about it?" the nightwing asked again.

For the 50th time, yes, Venom responded exasperatedly. **I was only part of the Bendy project for a little bit, and it was a while ago.**

"I just wish there was some way we could get more info..." he mumbled, getting up to go to the briefing. The meeting wasn't for another few minutes, but he had nothing better to do, right?

Well... the symbiote considered, stopping Deathbringer in his tracks.

"What? Was is it?" he asked. "What have you been hiding?"

Nothing! Venom insisted. **It's just... well... maybe, there's someone else that we both know. And hypothetically... they have an extremely high-security clearance. And conceivably, they ran this operation...**

"No," the nightwing said immediately. "We are not going to him"

He's our best bet.

"I told you! I'm not going to him!"

I cannot believe we are going to him.

Deathbringer entered the cave, cage where the most powerful

being in Pyhhria stood... or danced. He was in his cage, jumping and wiggling his arms in a way that loosely resembled some kind of ritual. Though, there was nothing sacred about this. When he saw Deathbringer, he suddenly jumped at the bars, holding onto them while sideways.

"Deathbringer!" the fox greeted, making the nightwing shiver. He must be being creepy on purpose. "It must be my birthday! What did you get me?"

"I need information," Deathbringer told him. He didn't want to be in there for any longer than he needed to be. "And you're gonna give it to me."

"Well, that's a pretty crappy birthday present..." Foxy pouted. "What's in it for me?"

"Maybe this will change your mind?" Venom offered. 2 strands of black liquid shot from Deathbringer's shoulders, grabbing Foxy and slamming him into the ceiling of his cage.

"Very valid argument," Foxy grunted, squirming slightly under the pressure. "I think this will be a great exchange."

"Glad we could work things out," Deathbringer said, and the black liquid let Foxy fall to the ground and retreated into the nightwing's shoulders. He had half expected Twisted to use his flames, but it wasn't like he was going to complain about i.

"One more thing," the fox told him. "If I give you what you want, you have to let me get some fresh air."

"Not a chance," Deathbringer said without hesitation. Of course, he wasn't going to let him out! Even when Deathbringer had lost control, fueled by that insane power, he *still* hadn't been able to beat Foxy. There was no telling what he was capable of, even if they took all the precautions they could.

"Well then I guess I can't help you," Foxy said indignantly, and Deathbringer smirked.

"You're choice," he told Twisted, before the black liquid shot from

Deathbringer's shoulders again. But this time, Foxy was ready. Swift as a serpent, a black blade appeared in his hands and he cut the ends of the strands off as they approached him. Deathbringer heard Venom grunt in pain as the tentacles retreated. The ends lay on the floor, squirming before melting into the floor.

"You know," Foxy snarled irritatedly. "You think you are so smart. You think you can boss me around, and I put up with it so far, but not anymore!"

"You're the one behind bars," Deathbringer reminded him smugly, only for the fox to bark a laugh.

"Do you think you beat me? I saw the timelines, I knew that I ended up in a cage no matter what, but you know what? It was up to me whose cage I was in, and how I got there. In most of the timelines, I kill you and Glory. But I thought *you know what? They're kinda entertaining. Let's keep them around and see how the story plays out."*

"Sure you did..." Deathbringer wanted to say that he knew that was impossible, but according to Venom, the nightmares had been planning this for thousands of years...

"You're only alive because I decided I wanted to keep you alive! Because I don't want to hurt you, I want to break you.

"Shut up."

"I want to cripple you so you can't go on! It's what I do! It's why I killed Venom's son, then brought him back.

"Shut up!"

"It's why I went after Glory. It's why I will use your future dragonet against you!"

KIll him... Venom demanded, but Deathbringer didn't need need to be told. He lept through the cage again, his body once again melting as he passed through the bars. But this time, Twisted had a different point to prove. The moment Deathbringer entered, Foxy's knee shot up and slammed the nightwing in the chin. His head

momentum whipped upward, causing Deathbringer to slam his head into the ceiling, stunning him for a moment. Not wasting a second, Twisted spun, slamming the back of his foot against the bodyguard's side.

Deathbringer tried to regain some ground, feinting before throwing another punch. But he once again underestimated the fox's skill. He blocked the blow and threw a punch of their own, once again stunning the nightwing. Then, Foxy picked Deathbringer up and stabbed his hook into the nightwing's shoulder. Deathbringer yelled in pain and tried feebly to lift Foxy's hook away. A hot sensation was flooding through his body... what was that? **Dammit... it's like Rogue's poison!**

"The toxin in my hook is spreading through your body," Foxy explained. "I took inspiration from Rogue's venom, but of course, I just had to put my little spin on it!"

Deathbringer coughed, sputtering blood. **I can't heal us! There's so much poison!**

"There it is," Twisted mused. "In fact, at this point, there is so much of the toxin in your bloodstream, I'm not sure if you can be saved."

There was a flash of red, and the fox was thrown away from Deathbringer. "Hands off!" Glory roared, her eyes red. Something traced its way down her arm before she threw it, and it once again hit Foxy. Deathbringer melted through the bars, landing on the ground. The rainwing threw the cover over the cage before calling her guards into the room.

"You're gonna be okay!" Glory sounded so far away. The nightwing felt his veins burning. He coughed up more blood. And then, in a moment he was brought back to the day of the storm. But from a different point of view. He was a small dragonet, not even a 1-year-old. She was in the storm, with her father. The rain beat down on her face.

"We're almost home," her dad had promised, but Deathbringer knew that she didn't feel scared. She felt a strange connection to the rain, to the energy. Suddenly, her father was ripped away. The girl

looked at her father, who was strung up against the tree by a metal cable around his neck. 2 red eyes greeted her from behind her father.

"Daddy!" she yelled, but then something hot spread throughout her body as the area got very bright and she felt very strange. It felt like her entire body was burnt to a crisp and healed in an instant... like her heart was now pounding in sync with the rain. She looked down at her talons, which were now crackling with red energy. She wanted to scream but she couldn't. Every chemical in her brain became imbalanced, and she saw everything for just a moment. Every equation, every form of life, everything wrong or right with the world, but it was only for an instant. When it was over, she saw her father, cuts all over his body. Only then could she scream.

Deathbringer Has An Acid Trip

"DEATHBRINGER!" Glory's voice broke through the haze, and Deathbringer opened his eyes. Everything seemed out of contrast. Glory seemed a dull grey, while Paradise, who was next to her, was a pale green. They were in a purple room, with a blue table next to them that had a lot of flowers. "Oh thank god you're ok. How many claws am I holding up?"

She held up... No, that wasn't right. Glory doesn't have 23 claws. "Is choosing not to choose a choice?"

"He's still him..." Glory confirmed with a sigh. "Why are his eyes a weird color?"

"The toxin is attacking his retinas, making them discolored," Paradise explained. "We're still working to find an antidote. Here, keep the pressure on the wound."

What wound? Deathbringer wondered, looking to the spot that Glory was now pressing against. Not only were his own scales pink, but bronze and silver liquid was pouring from the large gash in his shoulder.

"That doesn't look pleasant," Deathbringer observed, then chuckled. "Man. I have a girlfriend who spits venom, and a symbiote named Venom inside me, and venom is the thing that kills me."

"Don't say that," Glory demanded. Paradise came back with a large syringe and extracted some of the bronze liquid. Deathbringer laughed, suddenly.

"That's the same color as my first knife," Deathbringer explained and chuckled again. "Yeah, I got it from my mother, which, now that I think about it seems pretty obvious! Like, who else am I gonna get it from, really? Not like I had a dad to take care of me or some shit." The queen stared at him...

"You never talk about your childhood..." Deathbringer had always been rather cold when it came to his past. He had been a bit more open with her lately, but the subject of his younger years just seemed to bother him so much...

"Why would I?" Deathbringer laughed. "It was awful! Beatings and death and sociopathic tendencies! I never even told you I had a brother!"

"The toxin is making him high," Paradise explained. "It's like laughy gas, all of his natural barriers are knocked down, and he's just saying anything he thinks of."- she leaned close and whispered to the queen- "Keep him talking. Don't let him fall asleep."

"You're so beautiful," Deathbringer stated, brushing the side of Glory's face. "You remind me of Twilight. So beautiful and sweet but sassy. I guess that's just my kind of chick."

"Who's Twilight?"

"This girl I used to crush on," Deathbringer responded, gesturing with his talons. "Small girl, hatched early. But boy could she wreck your self-esteem. It was not a battle, it was a slaughter of the mind."

"Where is she now?"

"6 feet under," Deathbringer chuckled. "My brother killed her during a training session when I was... 6? About 6... Hey... 6 years old, 6 feet under. That's funny."

"Tell me about your brother."

"He was my older brother," Deathbringer sighed, his eyes rolling to the back of his head.

"No... No-no-no," Glory tapped Deathbringer's chest until his eyes fluttered open again. "Don't sleep ok? I need you to stay awake for me."

"But I'm tiiiiiiiiired," Deathbringer whined, rubbing his eyes.

"I know, honey," Glory said. "But stay awake for me. Ok? Can you

do that for me, Deathy?"

"Deathy?" Deathbringer said teasingly. "When did I become Deathy?" Glory chuckled, and so did Deathbringer. "Did I ever tell you why I didn't kill you that day?"

"I believe it was something about knowing I was special."

"Because on that day, it was exactly 3 years after my first mission. The mission where my mother died."

Glory looked him right in the eye. "I've never heard you mention your mother."

Deathbringer smiled. "Her name was Quickstrike because she could deliver a fatal blow in the blink of an eye"a -a tear rolled down Deathbringer's cheek-"I guess lightning can too, though, huh? That's why I didn't let you out during the storm. She was struck by lightning... Guess it runs in the family... And that day... That day I finally got tired of losing people I love, and made a promise that if I found someone that I knew would make me happy, I will abandon everything for them."

"Deathbringer..."

"I want to marry you Glory... But I'm afraid that I won't be able to."

"Stop, don't talk like that. We're gonna get you better."

Deathbringer began to say something but erupted into a coughing fit, spitting globs of silver liquid onto the floor.

"Clearthought!" Paradise called, and a nightwing was there in seconds. "I need a bucket for blood."

Clearthought nodded and ran to go get a bucket. Deathbringer started laughing.

"That nightwing was green," he said, amused, and Glory chuckled. There was a slight commotion outside, and Sunny entered.

"Glory! I heard what-- oh my moons..." she stared at Deathbringer

with wide eyes, who simply waved.

"You're blue," he said, tilting his head. "Wait no, you're grey!"

"Thanks for coming," Glory smiled, embracing Sunny.

"Of course! I'd be a terrible sister if I heard that you needed support and said *Nope! Not my business!* I'm ready to help in any way I can."

"Thank you. Right now we're just trying to get him stabilized."

Sunny walked over to the wound, helping to apply pressure. "What caused this?"

Glory glanced at Paradise, who was in the corner, trying to find the right drug to give Deathbringer. "It was you-know-who's hook."

Sunny growled at the thought of Foxy. "Why was he even there?"

"I was trying to get information because SOMEONE thought it would be a good idea..." Deathbringer responded.

"SHIT!" Paradise growled. "Umm... Ms. Sunny! 'mam! Umm... could you please, if it's okay with you, check with the front desk to see if we have any hyrdoxymethanicity necemovenefloafil?"

Sunny stared at Paradise for a moment. "I'm... I'm sorry could you repeat that?"

"Nevermind, I'll get it," the rainwing decided, dashing out of the room.

"Hey Sunny..." Deathbringer called. "You're cool."

"Alright," the sandwing sighed, ignoring the hysterical nightwing. "So, what exactly happened?"

"We went to talk to Foxy," Venom finally explained. **"I thought that, since we know so little about Bendy, he's our best bet at getting information... and while we were interviewing... we lost our temper."**

"You lost your temper?" Glory questioned. "Venom, you two almost died!"

"We *still* might die," the symbiote pointed out. **"Don't jinx us."**

"Okay, so bad news," Paradise said, walking into the room. "We don't have any more hyrdoxymethanicity necemovenefloafil."

"What's... hydroxy... that?" Glory asked, and Sunny suddenly gasped.

"Oh! Is that the one medicine from the Scorpian Den?" she asked excitedly, and Paradise nodded. "Right! It was a recently invented sort of miracle drug. It's an antibiotic, pain killer, a CNS depressant..."

"It's perfect for cases such as this," the doctor elaborated. "But *of course, we don't have any!"*

"Well, you can restock, right?" Glory asked, and Paradise shook her head.

"Somebody would have to go get it manually," she explained. "Our next shipment doesn't arrive for another week."

"Peril doesn't burn everything she touches anymore, right?" Glory asked bluntly. "She can do it."

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" Sunny questioned. "With her reputation and all?"

"She's the fastest flyer we have," Glory explained. "She can make the trip in half the time of any of us."

"That's dumb," Deathbringer said offhandedly. "Your dumb."

"We're trying to save your life," Sunny reminded him, and he shrugged. "If we don't get something in him soon, we're gonna lose him."

"Ask Foxy," Venom said weakly. **"It's his poison, he must have the antidote.** May I remind you that all of this happened from us

trying to get info," Deathbringer said out loud. "**I don't see you coming up with any bright ideas, Mr. Dead-in-3-hours.**"

"I'll go," Glory declared.

"I'll go," Sunny suggested. "No offense, but I'm least likely to lose my cool."

"Sunny, it's my duty to--"

"Glory," the sandwing said tenderly. "I understand that you're queen, but right now, I'm saying this as your friend and your sister: let me talk to Foxy."

Glory clenched her teeth, but she knew that Sunny was right, and nodded. Just a minute later, Sunny was in front of Twisted's cage. After a deep breath, she pulled the sheet off and looked him in the eyes.

"Sunny!" He exclaimed, surprised. "How you've grown in... how long has it been? I don't know--"

"What is the antidote," Sunny asked him in a demanding tone. "I only want to ask once."

"What's the magic word?" he teased, and Sunny growled.

"Twisted," she said sternly, and before she could scold him, he burst into laughter.

"Dang," Foxy barked. "You got it! You know what, just for that, here's part of the process. You need to take 3 Liters of the puss and heat it to 230* F. Once it's hot mix it with a Liter of Cactus juice, then freeze it for 20 minutes. After that, you can make some chocolate out of it."

"Why chocolate?" Sunny raised an eye ridge.

"Because it's gonna taste like crap," Twisted barked a laugh. "Doing this will slow the infection and stop the delirium."

"How do I know this isn't some trick," Sunny asked skeptically.

"How do I know it won't kill him instantly?"

Foxy grinned. "Honey, that's the best part. You don't. For all you know I could have just given you the formula for an even worse poison..."

"...But I'll just have to trust you," Sunny guessed, and Twisted's grin only widened.

"Exactly. Feed it to him and get some ice packs to bring his temperature down."

Sunny glared at him, but his grin was unwavering, his gaze unblinking. He was right, though. She had no choice but to trust him. If she ignored his advice... Deathbringer would probably be dead in the morning. So, she did as foxy instructed (minus the chocolate part, as that would just take too long). She cut the ice into small cubes. Hopefully, if he swallowed them fast enough... he could avoid the supposed rancid taste.

Every bad thing that could happen ran through her head as she finished freezing the substance. *Remember... this is your only option...* "Deathbringer, I'm gonna need you to eat this. It's not gonna taste good, but deal with it."

The nightwing opened his mouth to protest, but Glory silenced him. "Please, just take it, Deathy."

Deathbringer begrudgingly ate the mixture, gagging spitting out some of it. It took them quite a while for them to force him to get it down. Then, they waited for it to take effect. Sunny half expected him to explode, or die in some other extravagant way, but he didn't. He relaxed slightly, closing his eyes as he breathed out.

"No, Deathy," Glory said to him. "Remember what I said? You gotta stay awake."

"It should be fine, actually," Sunny corrected the rainwing, touching the nightwing's neck. "His pulse and temperature are stabilizing."

"Does that mean I can sleep?" Deathbringer asked, and before the sandwing could even finish nodding, he was asleep. Glory giggled

as Sunny sighed in relief... That was one thing she didn't have to worry about: Deathbringer spontaneously combusting. But... there was still a lot of work to do... "Glory, let's change his bandages. I don't know what kind of properties this puss has and I don't want it to cause an infection."

"By the way, Sunny," The queen grabbed some bandages and joined Sunny's side. "When did you start studying medical?"

"About 2 years ago," Sunny said. "I have Starflight to thank..."

"How does that work?" The last time Glory checked... Starflight was blind, and he couldn't exactly make flashcards...

"Well, I'm mostly self-taught, but I used Starflight's memory like flashcards," she chuckled. "He also helps me understand some of the concepts... man, the way that dragon's brain works is just amazing."

"You say that as if it's not also your achievement! Sunny, self-teaching medical school?"

"Well, we have a nurse at school who *actually* went to medical school," the sandwing sighed... something was different about Sunny. Glory had first noticed it during Foxy's trial, but she had assumed that it was just the heat of the moment... but now, she wasn't so sure. She might have simply changed over the years, but the rainwing thought that it was something else. The Sunny Glory knew would be very excited to tell others that she was studying medicine, but the sandwing just *refused* to accept any sort of praise...

"Hey... did something happen?" the queen asked, and Sunny hesitated.

"Let's just focus on the task at hand, alright?" she insisted. Something was *definitely up*...

"I want a cow," Deathbringer announced, awakening from his slumber to make his desire known. "Can someone get me a cow?"

"Maybe in the morning," Sunny assured him. "It's already dark out."

"Is it? Maaaaaaan. I really want a cow."

"We'll get you one in the morning," Glory promised, and Deathbringer once again retreated into his dreams. Glory thought that when he was like this, he was reminiscent of a dragonet.

"I should stay with him tonight," Glory suggested. "It's my responsibility as his--"

"Giiiiiiiiiiirrrrrllfriiiiiiiieeeeeeennnnnd!" the sandwing teased, making Glory realize that on the inside, they were *all* just overgrown dragonets. "In all seriousness, though, I have to go. I gotta create a lesson plan for tomorrow."

They said their goodbyes, and Glory was left alone with her boyfriend. She stared down at her claws. What had happened back there? In the past months, she had tried relentlessly to summon her mystic energy, and she found herself unable to conjure anything but a few sparks... then, when Deathbringer was in danger, she could fire full bolts of energy...

"How does he look?" Starflight asked, cautiously stepping into the room.

"Like he got stabbed in the shoulder with a poisoned hook," Glory responded, going to hug her brother. "It's really good to see you, Starflight..."

"Good to hear you too," he told her. "wow... that smells rancid... It really did a number on him, didn't it?"

The queen nodded. "Yeah... we've tried everything. Not even animus magic is working!"

"Did you try asking Foxy?"

"Sunny did, and he gave her the equivalent of a pain killer."

"Try asking him again."

"Starflight... That's not gonna work."

"Well, we can't be sure until we try, right?"

"You don't know him--"

"Neither do you," Starflight pointed out, slowly pacing. "Who knows? We've met bad guys who we thought were good. Why can't the opposite exist?"

"That's not what I'm saying, I'm just saying that it's not him. I... I've seen him do things... monstrous things... He's done things that nobody should ever do..."

"I'm just saying--"

"Forget it, alright?! I'm not talking to him! You haven't seen what I've seen!"

Starflight grit his teeth. "I haven't seen *anything,* actually, thanks for reminding me!"

Glory's eyes softened. "You know what I meant, okay? You must know what happened."

"Actually, I don't. All I know is what somebody told me happened, and you know that! But just because I didn't see it doesn't mean I'm worthless, or that what I have to say isn't important!"

"You know I didn't mean it like that."

Starflight gave a frustrated sigh and looked down. "Tell me something Glory... What does Fatespeaker look like?"

"I... What?" she asked, caught completely off guard by the question.

"I have no idea what she looks like anymore," Starflight explained, his voice breaking. "Same for you, and Sunny, and Clay, and Tsunami... Heck, everyone I know is disappearing. I can barely picture their faces from 9 years ago. Glory, just try to imagine not knowing the faces of the dragons you grew up with, the dragons you hatched with. The dragon who came out as gay just recently. The dragon having a dragonet next month. The dragon who just found her soulmate. The very dragon you love and want to marry."

Glory couldn't imagine that. She tried to imagine life without Starflight's nervous smile, Sunny and Clay's warm smile, and Deathbringer's smirk. Glory pulled Starflight into her, and he rested his head on her shoulder, sniffling.

"I'll help you find a ring," Glory promised. "When you propose to Fatespeaker, I will find you a ring."

"Thank you," Starflight said, and they stayed that way for a while.

"You wanna keep me company over here?" The rainwing asked with a smile. "While Deathbringer is asleep?"

"Yeah... that sounds nice..." he told her.

Tensions Even Higher

Deathbringer

Deathbringer watched as a wave of ink crashed down on Glory, wrapping around her and pulling her down. Down. Down. She was going to drown. He could not save her. It was his mother all over again.

Deathbringer

Qibli kissed an unknown figure, which flickered between being nothing but a silhouette and a skeleton. Suddenly, the figure slashed Qibli's throat, took the pouch around his neck, and left.

Deathbringer

Winter was in his house eating as a figure emerged from the darkness. They grab the icewing, shoving a syringe into his neck and dumping its contents into his bloodstream. As the figure fades, Winter becomes immobile, before picking up the knife on his table and slitting his own throat.

Deathbringer

He saw himself, as he was blasted by flames. His scales were instantly reduced to atoms, and the rest of him followed suit.

Deathbringer

Deathbringer sat up in his chair suddenly, yelling. He spasmed and twisted to escape from invisible claws. 3 dragons were by his side at an instant, holding him to the table, covering his mouth. They were trying to kill him; he was sure of it. One of them leaned close to his face, a mix of colors similar to that if you inverted a color scheme, with some kind of blindfold and razor-sharp teeth.

"Deathbringer, calm down, it's me," Glory's voice repeated over and over. He finally saw her face, which was orange... no, his eyes weren't working correctly. It was just Glory, the dragon he loved.

He looked back at the creature with the blindfold, which was replaced by Starflight, who was now green, and his blindfold was black. Then... there was a third dragon... Paradise, the doctor. He looked out the doorway, which held a group of nurses who were too late to the scene.

"It's alright!" Paradise assured them. "It was just a hallucinogenic episode, it's under control now!"

The nurses nodded, leaving them alone again... however, two dragons stayed.

"Queen Glory," Qibli announced, walking into the room. "My name is Qibli, you know me. I heard that you need volunteers to make up some kind of coast guard against the Nightmares. I don't care what it is, but I want to kill them."

"Me too," Winter said, emerging from behind Qibli. "They killed Moon, so we've come to take revenge."

"I appreciate your charisma," Glory told them. "But it's not my authority."

"With all due respect," Winter says. "I personally don't want everyone in Pyrhhia to look like that thing on the table."

Deathbringer was breathing heavily, sweating slightly. The ice on his head was now a pouch full of warm water. The bandage on his shoulder ripped during the struggle, and now puss and blood were spilling from the wound. Paradise was rushing to find bandages.

"First of all, you will not speak of my bodyguard that way," she told them sternly. "Second of all, I am not your queen. You are residents of the kingdoms of ice and sand, therefore, you must report to your respective queens, not me."

"SHIT!" Paradise cursed. "Okay! We're out of bandages! Your majesty and Mr. Starflight I need you to grab those clotting sponges and hold them firmly against the wound! And then... um... you! Sandwing guy! I need you to come with me and get bandages!"

"Wow, I feel--"

"No time for a witty remark!" she told him, yanking him along. "Lives are at stake!"

Meanwhile, Glory and Starflight took the clotting sponges, pressing them against the gash, but it just kept bleeding. A black liquid suddenly created a barrier, blocking the blood and holding it in. Glory sighed in relief.

"Finally," she sighed in relief. "It's about damn time, Venom."

"Who's Venom?" Winter questioned, and the rainwing cringed. *Right... I forgot he was here...*

"We could tell you," Deathbringer told him. "But then we'd have to kill you."

Glory slapped Deathbringer's arm. "You're not helping," she then addressed Winter. "I'll explain it later. Long story short, it's an ex-Nightmare that lives in Deathbringer."

"You brought another *Nightmare* in here?" Winter growled, eying Deathbringer, who flipped Winter off in return.

"He's fine," Glory assured him. "He saved my life multiple times, and he has been an active part in our battle against the Nightmares."

"I'm also the only defense you have against Foxy," Venom pointed out, and Winter jumped back, wide-eyed.

"What the f*ck?!" Winter exclaimed.

"Don't tell anyone," Starflight spoke up. "We want to keep it a secret since we don't think the community will accept him."

"*I* don't accept him," Winter exclaimed.

"That doesn't mean much," Qibli remarked, coming inside with Paradise, who rushed over to Deathbringer.

"What happened?" she asked frantically.

"It's ok," Glory told her. "He... he suddenly healed; I-I don't know

how!"

Paradise glared at her, and Glory sighed. "Okay... okay... close the door, and I'll tell you everything."

They obeyed the queen, and she sighed. There, she explained as much as she could as quickly as possible to Paradise, only going into more detail when it came to Venom. She did everything she could to convince Qibli and Winter that Venom was on their side, despite the death glares they were giving him. "Deathbringer is a Nightmare..." Qibli repeated, and as the nightwing made eye contact, he realized how complicated the sandwing's emotions were. So many emotions; fear, anger, grief, wonder. But one thing shone through clearly at the end when Qibli's eyes hardened and he reached into the pouch around his neck. *I'm going to kill you*.

"Look out!" Deathbringer yelled as the sandwing drew a blade from his pouch and ran at him. Paradise tackled Qibli, who dropped the knife. "What are you doing?" He growls. "People like him killed Moon!"

Winter, joining his friend, picked up the knife and targetted Deathbringer. Glory, however, lept in front of him. "Your majesty... he needs to die--"

Glory jabbed her wing into his throat, then slapped the knife out of talons, before tackling him. "I've lost him once, I'm not doing it again!"

Deathbringer attempted to stand and join the fight, but the moment he stood up he barfed. His entire sense of equilibrium was thrown off... he could hardly move!

The knife slid across the floor. Qibli pushed Paradise away and climbed for the knife. Starflight, feeling the weapon, picked up the knife curiously. The sandwing tackled him for it, causing the nightwing to panic and toss it across the room. Qibli ran for the knife again, but Glory slammed him into the wall, knocking him out. Winter picked Paradise up and threw her into Glory then lunged for the knife. He picked it up and tried to stab it into Deathbringer's head, who managed to block it. Glory leaped into

the air with a spin, used her tail to knock it toward the doorway.

The knife spun in the air until it came to an abrupt stop in a dragon's talons. "WHAT IN ALL OF PYRRHIA IS GOING ON IN HERE?!" Clay roared, and his voice boomed throughout the room. All of the dragons froze in a sort of dogpile. "Qibli? Winter? I expect better from both of you! The time of dragons killing dragons is over!"

"But--"

"There are no buts!" he insisted. "We are facing an interdimensional threat! Dragon kind is not the enemy!"

Qibli stood up, staring at the ground. "They killed Moon..." he told Clay. "They killed her right in front of me and then had the nerve to laugh about it."

The mudwing's eyes softened as he approached the sandwing. "Qibli... I know that Moon's death was hard on you, but these dragons... they're not to blame. Venom turned on the very person that *did* kill Moon. He is our ally."

Qibli and Winter stared dejectedly at Deathbringer before leaving. "Are you all alright?" Clay asked.

"This is my 2nd ever patient as a real doctor..." Paradise told them. "I wasn't ready for this..."

"We deeply apologize..." Glory told her.

"On the bright side, you were fuckin sick," Deathbringer told her, and she smiled.

"Oooh... you are so high right now..." Paradise observed. Clay sighed.

"I... I have some bad bad news..." he told them, and they all looked toward him. "Sunny told me about what happened, so... I spoke with Foxy..."

"You talked to him?" Glory questioned. "Clay, do you have any idea

how dangerous just talking to that monster is?"

"Well, we had no solutions, so I thought it was worth a shot..."

"Well?" Starflight asked. "What did you find out?

The mudwing was quiet for several moments. "There is no antidote."

Glory didn't remember moving, but suddenly she was right in front of her brother, staring at him. "What do you mean there's no antidote?" she questioned. There has to be an antidote, a way out! A way to save Deathbringer! She wasn't going to lose him again!

"He didn't make the poison, so he doesn't have the antidote," Clay explained, backing away.

"No no no no," the rainwing denied, pacing. "He must've been lying! He's a liar, that's what he does! There's an antidote, he just won't tell us! We need to force it out of him!"

"Glory... I don't think he was lying..." Starflight butted in. "Think about it... if he wanted Deathbringer dead, he wouldn't be here right now. He'd have burned him up in that chamber when you weren't looking..."

"If he wanted him alive he wouldn't have stabbed him!" Glory pointed out.

"True... but I think there's something here that we're missing..."

Glory paced around the room. What was she going to do? She looked at Deathbringer. He was a hot mess. No normal medicine was ever going to heal him. She looked at Starflight, who was trying to find the missing link. Then, she looked at Clay. She saw something there. There was something that he wasn't telling them. "Clay, I know there is another way."

He flinched, looking away from her. "No," he decided. "it's too dangerous, I'm not gonna send my sister--"

"Clay," Glory said sternly. "If there is a way to save him... Think of what he has done for us."

"I can," the mudwing told her. "But I can also think of the ways that you die, and how life would be like if I didn't have you here!"

She went over and hugged embraced him, a gesture he returned without hesitation. "I'm not a dragonet that you need to protect anymore," Glory reminded him. "I'm all grown up."

"I know," Clay told her, sniffling. "Fine... He says that... to get the antidote, you need to go through something called The Panic Room..."

Die Metal Pimple Of DEATH!

"You *actually* want to go through with this?" Foxy asked, utterly bewildered.

"Just tell me what I need to do," Glory said sternly. If she thought it over too much, she knew she'd realize it was a bad idea... so this needed to be over as quickly as possible.

"You do realize that the panic room is a place that exposes your deepest darkest insecurities until it either you overcome them, or it breaks you entirely, right?"

"Foxy," Glory demanded. "Get me there."

Foxy sighed. "There's an artifact in the Nightmare base, it's called the Mystic Crystal. I need that in order to open a portal."

"Wait, what?" Glory said. She had expected that Foxy would do something and send her off. She had expected some kind of magic, or tingling sensation as she was whisked away into a distant land.

"Yeah," Foxy said sarcastically. "Who knew that it actually took an effort to rip a hole in space-time?"

"Alright," Glory relented. As much as she hated to admit it, the multiverse was Twisted's domain. "Where is it?"

"As I said, the Nightmare base, inside of a vault. To access it, you'll... Need this," Twisted sighed in annoyance, raising his hook. Before she could ask what he is doing, the fox stabbed it into his arm, cursing and growling. Glory heard bones snap and break inside of him as she stared in utter disgust and confusion. He grunted, and a small bloody object fell to the floor.

"What the hell?" Glory questioned, staring in horror as the fox cheerily picked up the bloody silver disk.

"It's my ID disk! I always keep it inside of my skeleton because then,

even if I'm burnt to a crisp, it's safe on me! Anyway! It will give you access to the control panels that you need. To get there, go to the Nightwing tunnel, and walk 430 ft then turn right. Hold up the disc and walk another 200 ft then turn left. When you do, you will see a metal door. Keep holding up the disc! If they don't see it, they will kill you without hesitation. Once you're inside, turn right, skip the next turn, turn left, and look for a marked door. Ill write the symbols down for you."

Glory thought about what he said, looking up at the fox who just stood there wearing a giant grin. She didn't trust this one bit... "Why are you helping me," the queen questioned. "This entire time you've been trying to kill us and sabotage us... why the change of heart."

The fox laughed, which, at this, point, she shouldn't even be surprised about. "You are really not as smart as I thought you were," he told her. "I haven't been trying to kill you...okay, well maybe once or twice. But let's just say that there's something in it for me in the long run, how does that sound?"

"Sketchy..."

"Great! Also, this is very important: DO NOT TOUCH THE ARTIFACT! An infinitesimally tiny piece of that crystal would be enough to create a black hole so powerful it would cause all of Pyhhria to cave in on itself instantaneously. Once the thing is out of containment, you have about 5 seconds before it becomes unstable and that whole black hole thing happens, so make sure the materials are ready before you do. Also, I suggest you bring someone with you."

"What? Why?" she asked him, and he groaned.

"God, I gotta explain everything to you, don't I? Well..." Once again, the fox jammed his hook into himself, this time into his ear! Several seconds and a bucket worth of blood later, another small device fell to the floor. To the rainwing's disgust, he offered it to her. "Put this in your ear, it'll let us communicate. There is another piece to it that I need, so I can guide you through the rest of the process. I buried it right before I burned the forest down."

Glory stared at Foxy for a moment... does... does that mean he *planned* this?! He buried that device in preparation for this exact scenario... were they just playing into his hands? No... no, surely that wasn't the case! He must've buried it for another reason, for a plan that was no longer in motion... "So, that's your mission: bring me the other ear piece, and then bring me the mystic crystal! OH! And remember this number: 8721219."

"What is it for?"

"Eh, don't worry," he told her, before grinning sinisterly. "It'll all add up the second you need it."

~~~~~~

Less than an hour later, she was off. Of all the dragons, Twisted recommended Qibli to go with him. She had secretly hoped he'd refuse so she could bring someone she actually trusted, but he agreed. It seemed like Clay's speech really got to him...

The rainwing hadn't known Qibli very well before this, but they had met on multiple occassions. Queen Thorn had introduced him as her son, even though she knew it was a bit more complicated... but this didn't seem like that energetic, cautious sandwing she had met before... he felt... cold.

"How is Thorn doing?" She asked, hoping to loosen some of the tension. The scarred sandwing glanced at her.

"We haven't spoken in a while," he sighed.

"I thought that you two were really close."

"We don't have to talk," Qibli said with a stern look, determined to end the conversation there. Glory had heard that when he first arrived at Jade Mountain, he hadn't stopped thinking about Thorn for several days. So, it was really offputting to see that he wouldn't even mention her name...

Glory sighed. "Look, I know that you and Moon were close-"

At the very mention of Moon's name, Qibli shot up and glared at
~~~~~~

her. "Don't... just don't."

It happened so fast.

The only indication was a quick hiss from below, then suddenly a flash of silver... then there was blood. Before he knew it, a harpoon had gone right through the base of Qibli's tail, before yanking him to the forest floor. Shouting his name, Glory raced to the ground as fast as possible, just in time to see the sanding be swallowed by an enormous metal cocoon.

"Qibli?!" the queen yelled desperately, searching for an opening. "Qibli?! Are you there?!"

But there was no response... *That doesn't mean he's dead,* she reasoned. *I just need to find a way to get him out!* The rainwing desperately searched for an opening, some kind of panel. She took Foxy's disk, placing it against the metal in hope of accomplishing *something*!

There!

The disk was taken from Glory's talons, and a screen emerged from the smooth service... if only she could find the release button... but there was only one issue...

Even if there was one, Glory wouldn't be able to find it.

The controls were in an utterly alien language of strange symbols, similar to the ones Foxy had written down for her! She couldn't understand anything! In the top right, there was what seemed to be a count down with more symbols under it, and Glory didn't need to read the symbols to know that it was counting down to Qibli's death. She randomly clicked a button, and it brought her to another screen with even more buttons. *Why is this so complicated?!*

But these symbols were different... each button was another pattern... different languages? None of them were languages she could understand. *Think, Glory!* she told herself. *You're a mystic, right? Do mystical stuff!*

She closed her eyes, trying to access some ancient pool of knowledge that would allow her to understand at least one of these language! Something... anything... When the rainwing opened her eyes, there it was.

Kreosi .

Kreosi was an ancient language used by dragons about 1,000 years before the Scorching. The guardians had taught them a little bit about it under the mountain, but she hadn't paid much attention.

Time to see how much I remember. She thought and switched the language setting to Kreosi. She returned to the main hub and it looked somewhat more familiar. She could also understand the timer in the top right...

54 seconds.

It was time to hurry. I*nku Ibi Imbakan.* That meant something like memory storage, which must have something to do with the archives. Wasn't what she was looking for.

50 seconds.

The next one was unreadable, so Glory moved on. *Ukuzan Divert.* That one meant something like games or entertainment. Not gonna help. *Bo'khipa.* That one meant *handle contents*! Glory pressed it, and more options appeared. MANY options.

43 seconds.

Glory read more and translated it in her head. *Vernitch Termy,* that one meant exterminate, which was not what she was trying to do! *Habino Locus* meant something like removing time. *Jazz Bemuvie* meant something like lock-in. *Operetta Thusi* was some kind of curse word. *Stanislavski* was... that was it!

28 seconds.

Glory hastily pressed it, and a warning popped up on screen. It stated: *Owin, degat hi ukawangi. Yasdag Vienona?* She translated it quickly. *Warning, target of interest. Release anyway?* The rainwing pressed what she thought was yes and was represented with a screen with a number pad, asking for a special pin. She tried to think of something Foxy had told her, and then remembered: 8721219. She entered the pin into there, but it was a 4 letter pin...

What could she do here?! She hadn't been given any other hints... *what did he say?* she wondered. Maybe he had added some kind of cryptic message? If so, how was she supposed to figure it out in the time she had left-

"It'll all add up the second you need it..."

He had said that so ominously, it had stuck wit her... add up? But $8+7$ is 15 and there aren't any numbers over 9... *the second...* She growled, cursing Twisted and his riddles... Adding up the pairs, starting from the second number goes $7+2=9$, $1+2=3$, $1+9=10$... in this case, 10 would be 0, and there's the 8 left over...

10 seconds.

The code was 9308! She smashed the numbers into the keypad and pressed enter. The disk was spit back out at her, and the screen dissappeared.

Silence followed.

With another hiss, the capsule opened and the rainwing could finally hear Qibli's screams, and she didn't understand why until she saw him. The harpoon had utterly destroyed the sandwing's leg, to the point where Glory doubted he'd ever fully recover! It was all she could do to keep from vomiting at the sight!

He knew this would happen... Glory realized, cursing Twisted. He had given her that code with the goal of being intentionally misleading... it's why he wanted Qibli to come along! Had he hoped that the sandwing would die there?

Or was this too a part of his plan?

And what the goal of that plan? After all this time, they still had no idea what the Nightmares were after! Supposedly they were after this world, but why go through all the trouble just to get this dimension? Surely there were others that were just as good! Why here? Was it simple pride that kept them coming back, or was there perhaps something else?

But Qibli's groans of pain pulled the queen from her thoughts, and she quickly rushed to tend to his wounds as best she could. *I can think about that later...* she decided. *Right now, I need to do this... for Deathbringer...*

The Nightmare Base

Glory gulped as, in the distance, she saw the silver door, sticking out like a sore thumb in the absolute blackness of the old nightwing portal.

It had been a day since Qibli was trapped in the strange contraption. The pain had rendered the sandwing all but immobile, so Glory had to wait until her dreamvisit with Sunny that night. They had sent a few skywings to handle it, so the other piece should be getting to Foxy any minute now... But until then, she couldn't stop! She had already wasted a whole day, and Bendy was approaching fast...

So, following Twisted's instructions, she slowly approached the gate with the disk. She remembered his warning about X21, who apparently guarded the door... were they here now? Watching her? Looking around, the rainwing didn't see anyone or anything out of place... were they just that good at hiding?

She encountered no one on her way to the crystal room, which Glory found very eerie... Shouldn't there be someone guarding this supposed ancient artifact? She had to pass numerous security checkpoints with her disk, but there was no real security. Surely these interdimensional terrorists weren't on a coffee break...

"Where is everyone?" she asked Twisted.

"You do realize this isn't the only planet under colonization, right?" he scoffed. "Focusing all of our efforts on just one base would be stupid."

"But shouldn't there be *someone*?" she asked, only to be met a light chuckle.

"Trust me, you'll see them soon enough..."

That was... ominous. In fact, this whole place was very unsettling.

There was nothing specifically creepy about it but... just how *plain* it was, despite all the evil going on within. Smooth, hard, steel walls with flourescent lights above her, buzzing just faintly, surrounded her on all sides. There was no variation to any part of any wall, and so Glory constantly got deja vu, thinking she was just going in circles. *Just follow his directions...* she told herself. *You're okay...*

There it was. The door with the symbols Twisted had shown her. This door, along with the keypad next to it, was the first bit of color the rainwing had seen in what felt like hours! She swiped the disk over the screen, and once again, there was prompt for a zip code. Except, this was *very* different from the numbers she was used to! There were not 10 options from 0-9, but instead hundreds, each with a unique symbol.

"Foxy... I see a keypad with a bunch of wierd symbols, what do I do?" she asked. On the other end, the fox groaned.

"Crap! I forgot about that!" he cursed, thinking deeply. "Okay, I know the password... but I'm not sure how to explain it to you..."

"What even is this language, anyway?"

"It's not technically a language, it's numerical system, the only universal system used throughout the multiverse, in fact. It's mainly used in the classification of dimensions."

"Okay... well how are you gonna tell me the code when I don't know any of these numbers?"

"I'm working on that..." he promised, before going silent for several minutes. Meanwhile, Glory was just stuck in the hallway, waiting. What if someone saw her? What kind of horrible things would they do? What would happen to Deathbringer, to the rest of Pyrrhia if she failed this mission?! All because Foxy was *thinking?!* "Alright, I got it! It's gonna be hella annoying, but you're gonna have to count each one out, okay?"

"What?! That's gonna take forever!"

"Oh, would you prefer if I instead taught you an entirely new numerical system? *Would that be faster for you?"*

"Fine, fine! Just tell me!" There was still the possibility of being intercepted. She hadn't seen anyone so far, but they could very well be lying in wait... ready to pounce as soon as she let her guard down...

"Alright, the first one should be... the 483rd number in the combination..."

Alright, she could speed this up by a bit. There were ten symbols in a row, so she could simply count out 48 rows and then an additional three... She glanced over her shoulder every few seconds with the eerie feeling that someone was watching her, like death was just around the corner.

"234th number, then the 329th."

She counted out 23 rows, then another 4... She heard footsteps and whipped her head towards the sound... no one was there... but something was getting closer... just waiting for her to turn her back again.

"Are you still there?!" Foxy questioned. "Keep typing!"

Despite all of her instincts screaming, she turned back to the keypad. She quickly counted out 32 then an extra 9 and told Twisted she was ready for the next number. "Alright, next is-"

"Hey there, sexy!" a familiar voice exclaimed before Glory felt a harsh slap on her backside. She whipped around, baring her teeth, only to have her eyes widen.

"D-Deathbringer?" she questioned, reaching out to touch his face. He cackled and slapped her hand away.

"Yeah, okay, very funny," he chuckled. "What are ya doin' over here? You know you don't have clearance to be here! Besides, I thought you and YK-03 were hooking up?"

"That's not the real Deathbringer!" Twisted told her. "He's copy we

made for our plan, which, before you ask, is no longer in operation!"

"Hello? Earth to GW-04?" not-Deathbringer called, waving his talon in front of her face. You know, now that she looked at him, it wasn't identical to the nightwing... at least not the current one. This was Deathbringer about a year ago. She knew because she had recently grown quite acquainted with his body....

Let's move on.

"Yeah, sorry!" she said, shaking her head. "I have orders from... BLT...69..." she said, just coming up with random numbers on the spot. Not-Deathbringer laughed.

"Haha, I get it! Funny number!" he said, and Glory laughed too despite not knowing what the heck he was talking about. Which one was the funny number? 6 or 9? "Anyway, I'm gonna head over to YK-03, maybe I can keep him *comfortable* until you arrive."

"Well, don't have too much fun without me," she told him, feeling dirty just for saying it to this cheap copy of the dragon she loved.

"No promises!" he laughed, prancing down the hall.

"BLT-69?' Twisted questioned, to which the rainwing simply rolled her eyes.

"I panicked, alright? And by the way, why in all the moons are Nightmares so sexual?!'

"They're programmed to breed as much as possible, so we have more soldiers. Once GW-04 is finished with YK-03, they will lay eggs in as little as 4 days. Then, those eggs will hatch after a week, and the emerging lifeform will reach sexual maturity after about a month. DB-08, the one you were just talking to, is actually only 4 years old-"

"I am really sorry I asked, can we please just get on with the code?!"

The rest of the code was utterly exhausting. 23 characters, all of which were incredibly inconvenient to type! "Alright!" Twisted

exclaimed. "That's step one!"

"Step *one?!"* Glory growled, stepping through the doors into a large empty room. "Why does this have to be so complicated?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, would you prefer a key under the doormat to guard one of the most powerful relics in the multiverse?! If anything it needs to be *more* complicated!"

"Whatever, Foxy! Just tell me what to do!"

"Alright... hmm... have you ever taken ballet?"

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Glory spun before leaping between the lasers and landing with a slide, panting heavily. "Password accepted," the system told her as the maces, machine guns, lasers, rocket launchers, and more violent weapons retracted back into the wall.

"Outstanding, Glory!" Twisted could be heard clapping from the other side of the line. "You survived, so I can only assumed you moved with the grace of a trained dancer!"

Blood poured from several, deep wounds, many of which were filled with shrapnel. The only thing keeping her standing was adrenaline, without that, she'd have collapsed several hours ago... had she really been doing this for hours? It felt like days...

"And with that, Glory, you have completed the last challenge!" Foxy assured her. The rainwing limped into the next room, blood dripping from her mouth. "Now, move onto the next room and the crystal will be waiting for you! From there, you're going to create a mock-crystal."

"Mock crystal?" the queen nearly sobbed. "I did all this... for a fake crystal?"

"Well of course! You didn't think that we had the authority to take the real crystal, did you?" he laughed at her. Usually, Glory would've gotten angry, but in this much pain, she really just wanted to start crying.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

However, as she approached where the crystal was, she felt a tugging deep within her soul. She was being drawn to it... and the strangest part was that it felt so familiar! Like this was something she'd been looking for all her life.

The crystal was located in a large black cylinder in the center of big room, filled with streams and wisps of flowing red energy that danced across the room. It was beautiful. With a mind of its own, one of those wisps circled Glory before stopping in front of her face; and for a moment, she thought she saw someone smiling at her....

"Annoying little things, aren't they?" Twisted groaned. As if it heard his voice, the wisp suddenly darted away, melting into one of those streams. "This room was built specifically to contain the energy of the mystic crystal, and yet, some of it still manages to seep out. Nobody knows how. Only a matter of time until a power surge..."

"How do I get what I need?" Glory questioned. The fox guided her through the process of selecting a vessel, and then how much energy to fill it with. Once those settings were selected, the machine began the process automatically.

Glory looked around her as the wisps stared at her curiously, poking their heads from the streams of energy. They weren't just manifestations of energy, they were alive. They approached Glory, floating around and examining her.

"It's her," one of the wisps whispered, triggering a string of sounds and murmurs from the other ghosts. More and more emerged, approaching Glory.

"Is it, really?" "Queen Glory!" "His daughter!" "Mother of Doom!" "Does she know?" "Why is she here?" "For him!"

They danced around her, praising her. Who were they? How did they know her? And why did she matter so much to them? The machine beeped as the process was completed, and a capsule containing the crystal was ejected. The moment Glory touched it, however, a shock shot through her body, filling her with electricity.

The streams wrapped around her, flowing into her scales and filling

her with this wonderful sensation. She felt like she was home, more than she had ever felt in her life, under the mountain or as Queen. She felt like there was a reason she was born, not just a substitute for a fake prophecy, but someone who could make a difference. Her mind was opening, her view expanding.

Shapes danced across her eyelids, putting everything else out of focus as she looked out of everything, out of this base, out of this continent, out of this world. She saw more than what was visible or invisible…

“There you are!” Deathbringer materialized, that charming smile across his face as he sprung towards another shape. He looked a little older here, but… happier. Not the kind of happy that has you jumping for joy, but the kind of satisfaction that comes with being truly content in life. “I found you, you little troublemaker!”

A dragonet giggled somewhere Glory couldn’t see, and Deathbringer chased after them before lunging, sending them both tumbling into some grass. The dragonet in his embrace was no more than 2 years old, giggling and struggling against Deathbringer, who pretended to be severely wounded by their assault.

“Oh, how foolish I was to have challenged such a powerful warrior!” the nightwing cried, before slumping over and trapping the dragonet beneath his heavy wing. They both shared a good laugh before standing upright. “Come on, your mom’s waiting for us back home.”

Tears fell down Glory’s face as she realized what this was, what this meant. Deathbringer was going to live… and they would have a family! A baby boy, strong like his father and intelligent like his mother. One who would go on to change the world, to rule it in his own way.

She saw them together, playing and laughing, teaching, learning, loving. She saw herself teaching her son to use his venom but telling him never to do so unless absolutely necessary. She saw herself, reprimanding Deathbringer for teaching their son how to roast someone into oblivion.In the distance, saw she and Deathbringer in their most intimate moments, laying beside or atop

one another, sharing their love, their passion.

Everything was going to be alright…

“DIE!” an explosion rocked her mind as she was suddenly met with a new vision, this one of Jade Mountain. More explosions triggered in the distance, and the school began to crumble, collapsing in on itself as the dragons within screamed in agony.

There was fire everywhere. Her baby was in danger. Her baby was always going to be in danger because of the Nightmares, because of who he was, who he could be. So many conflicting futures, all so drastically different. Glory and Deathbringer fighting alongside each other, and the nightwing devouring her corpse. Bending reality to her will and tearing herself apart trying. Her son battling Twisted, saving the world.

Or shattering the multiverse alongside him.

It was too much. She was going to die. The crystal kept pulsing, filling her mind with things that didn’t exist and filling her body with something that could not be contained. She was going to explode. Her body couldn’t take any more. She was dying, slowly… she had made it so far, but the crystal would not relinquish it’s hold from her. She clutched the mock crystal, praying that someone, something, would save her…

Her body swelled. She thought of Deathbringer, back at the hospital. She needed to save him… she couldn’t go back to how it was before she met him! Ruling this kingdom would’ve drove her crazy long ago if it hadn’t been for him… she wanted to be near him, to hold him and tell him that it was going to be okay… she had to see him again, there was no way that she was going to allow this to be her end. She was going to leave…

She was determined.

Escape

Who was yelling? Far in the distance, someone was screaming Glory's name... she couldn't see anything. Had she gone blind? No... she could see that there was light just beyond her eyelids... but they were just so heavy. Was it her sun time? She felt so exhausted like she could just sleep like this for–

A bucket of ice-cold water was suddenly dumped on Glory's face, startling her awake immediately. She was back in the hospital, surrounded by Sunny, Starflight, and Clay. "Glory!" Sunny squeaked... oh, that's who had been calling her. "Glory, are you alright?"

"I..." the rainwing queen's head swiveled from side to side, their mind working a million miles a minute. What just happened? Wasn't she just in the Nightmare base? That wasn't all a dream, right? No, she was still clutching the box for the crystal in her hand... "How did I get here...?"

"We were hoping *you* could tell us," Clay told her. "You just... *appeared!*"

"Appeared?" Glory echoed... had the crystal somehow brought her here? Or had she done it herself?

"Are you alright?" Starflight asked, reaching out to touch her. The nightwing immediately reeled back, shocked by static electricity.

"I'm fine," she told him, forcing herself to stand. The world around the queen was still swimming, but there was no time to waste... Bendy was going to be here soon. She needed to get the crystal to Foxy... She had to save Deathbringer.

They were going to be a family; that was set in stone, and she would do anything to keep it that way. There was nothing she wasn't willing to do... she wasn't going to lose him again.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

As Glory and Anemone stood in front of Foxy's cage, it felt as if the entire world was holding its breath; and if this went wrong, it very well may be their last.

Because the cage that Lefte designed blocks the flow of energy, Twisted wouldn't be able to open a portal from within it; which meant that, in order to save the world, they'd have to release the person who sought to destroy it. Anemone glared at the fox as Glory talked to him.

"Anemone already has a spell prepared," the rainwing warned him. "The moment you get out of line, it will send you back to your cage and lock this door before you can do any harm. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes, Glory, I'm very frightened," he assured her. "Now come on, we don't have all day!"

Heart pounding, the rainwing nodded to Anemone, who stretched her hand toward the cage. A moment later, the bars morphed into a door and released the beast. For the first time since he nearly destroyed the rainforest, the fox's paws touched the ground. The room suddenly felt very cold as he let out a sigh, his teeth glinting in the lantern light. "Oooh, it feels so good to stretch my legs," he observed, though his eyes remained trained on the rainwing queen. Neither of them dared to speak, too focused on watching what he'd do next. ***"Die."*** That same feeling from the forest came back as , that feeling of overwhelming dread as one thought entered her mind.

DEATH.

But just a moment later, he burst into a fit of laughter, falling to the floor in his hysterics. "You should've seen your facessss!" he wheezed, gasping for air.

"Are all Nightmares this childish?" Anemone muttered, wondering how, just moments before, this creature nearly made her sob in utter terror.
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

"Nah, just some of us," he laughed, wiping tears from his eyes. "Okay, okay... I'm alright, I'm alright. Glory, do you have the crystal?"

The Queen grabbed the container and put it out for Twisted to grab. "You promise that I can trust you?"

"No," he stated simply. "I can't promise anything, but you're gonna do it anyway because you have no choice."

Glory growled at him, but eventually handed him the container. He was right. If she wanted to save Deathbringer, then she had to play along with his game.

The moment his hand came into contact with the box, Glory saw millions of possibilities shoot through his head. He was now the most powerful creature in Pyrrhia, armed with the most powerful artifact in the multiverse. Anything he wished for could be his, all he had to do was choose to take it. The greed and lust he felt was visible on his face... but he had to get himself under control. The plan may be in shambles... but he was still on track to get what he wanted.

"There is a slight... complication to this arrangement," Foxy told them. Glory raised an eye ridge.

"What do you mean *complication?* You said you'd get me to the panic room, and get me back."

"And I will," he assured her. "That is a Foxy Guarantee! Provided you survive the Panic Room, that is. But in order for me to know that you're done so I can bring you back, I will need to keep tabs on you using the mystic crystal–"

"Absolutely not!" Anemone suddenly butt in. "You know what he's asking, right Glory? He's saying he needs to be out of his cage!"

"That's correct," Twisted told them. "That is what I'm saying."

"There's no way we're gonna let you do that!" The seawing protested. "I already know that you kidnapped my brother and sister! There's no way I'm going to set you free again!"

"What if I say *twice as much, please*?" He smirked. That did it. The crystal fell to the floor as the fox was sent back into his cage, the door slamming shut before him.

"Glory, we're done here," Anemone stated, storming off. The rainwing retrieved the crystal before running after her.

"Anemone, wait," she called. "Think rationally about this."

"I don't think *you're* the one thinking rationally!" the seawing snapped. "You're the one who told me about how dangerous the Nightmares are, and now you're willing to set this guy free just to save your boyfriend!"

"That's... that's not true!"

"Oh really? Then what *is* true, Glory?"

"I... I..." She knew Anemone was right. She was risking everything just so Deathbringer and her could have a chance at a future... But she couldn't say that right now. "Saving Deathbringer means saving Venom, whose strength we need in order to fight Bendy. Without Deathbringer, Pyrrhia is doomed anyway." The other dragoness grit her teeth. "Trust me, I know how infuriating he is, and that you're upset that he took your brother and sister... but Tsunami was like a sister to me, too... We have to do this, for her."

That seemed to win her over. "He needs to be under 24/7 surveillance," Anemone said. "And if anything goes wrong, anything at all, we're bringing you back and locking him back up."

Glory nodded. "Thank you."

"Thank me by healing Deathbringer, so we can kill that bastard and get my siblings back."

Entering The Panic Room

Glory awoke with a start at her desk, cluttered small letters, a cup of water, and an empty plate with a napkin to the left. Her face had caused the ink to smudge all over the paper, and upon a quick wipe with her talon, she discovered that she had ink all over her face. Glory reviewed her letters, making sure she had everybody. She had one for all the queens, Grandeur, Stonemover, and all of her friends. Glory grabbed a cup of water that she had put on her desk and combined it with the napkin to clean off the ink on her face.

The letters contained her final messages to her friends, in case she didn't make it back. She hadn't originally intended on making them, but Foxy had insisted. "You couldn't pay me enough to go to that damn place," he had explained. "So far, only 12 people have ever made it through, despite the billions that have tried." That had scared her into doing it. *But I'm going to come back,* she told herself. *I have to... for the sake of the whole world.*

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

About 12 minutes later, the queen arrived at the point she and Anemone had agreed to meet; deep in the forest, about a mile from the border of the new Rainforest Kingdom. When she arrived, she was met with a field that had been utterly flattened, even the dirt melted and then cooled to create a smooth surface. In the center, Foxy sat with his legs crossed and eyes closed, the crystal floating in front of him. The glowing red shard retreated down back into the box as the queen approached.

"Morning, Glory," he greeted, eyes still not open. "You notice that I brought you out to this... hellscape, but for a good reason. This crystal, even when contained, is a massive energy source, and with any energy extraction there's a massive exothermic reaction, this is the 27th face I've had to regrow after being blown up by this thing. Anemone, bring the... the thing."

The seawing stood at the edge of the blast radius, cautiously coming
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

forward. Clearly the fox wasn't the only one who had been surprised by the destructive power of the crystal. She approached the rainwing with a bracelet, diamonds forming a number: 3:00:00.

"It's a countdown. I calculated the amount of time you'll have before, in our time, Bendy will be almost here. The countdown will start once you enter the dimension. Glory..." Foxy crouched down awkwardly so that his face was level with hers and put his hands on her shoulders. "I cannot stress enough that you need to be prepared for what is about to happen. You are going to be teleported into a place known only known as the Panic Room. This room is a dimension of a Spectrum called Crouseless Cleeassmentas, which translates to Cruel Punishment. The moment you enter this dimension, it suddenly knows everything about you, and it will use that leverage to break you down and hurt you in ways that you couldn't imagine. It will put you in situations you dread the most, situations that you didn't even know you didn't want to happen. All you need to do is overcome one of these fears, and you will have your prize. But I must warn you, do not tell yourself that it isn't real, because that is far from true. You can die there, and if you do, your soul will be forced to live in this torment forever. I will bring you back in 3 hours, which will be 3 days before Bendy arrives in Pyrrhia."

Glory took this in for a moment, nodding. *Don't think about it... don't chicken out.* Foxy took the box, held it in the air in front of him, then let go and let the raw power of the crystal stand before them. Foxy traced his arms dynamically around the crystal, creating shapes that surrounded the crystal, intriquate symbols and signs. Every movement was calculated; graceful but rigid. Foxy then pulled back one arm as if drawing a bow and the center of the shape stretched back toward him. He looked at Glory. "Ready?"

"Yes," Though Glory wasn't quite sure if she meant it. However, it was good enough for Foxy, who then pushed at the center of the symbols, causing to protrude forwards and blast out a single, concentrated beam into the floor a few meters away. Red cracks began to form, starting from Foxy's fingers and traveling up his arm. Glory could tell that they must hurt.

My moons, Glory realized. *He's dying. Just being near this crystal is*

enough to kill him.

That information would be useful for the future...

"Get ready to run!" Foxy yelled. A large crack in the earth was beginning to form, and skinny, rock-like like tentacles began to seep from it. "Looks like the Panic Rooms ready to come to us."

The darkness was mostly held back by the red beam, but it was still managing to seep out. Foxy groaned, before yelling out with effort as the beam intensified and black energy began to spew from his scars. However, despite his efforts, the darkness continued to creep into their world. Foxy suddenly abandoned his complicated symbol and seized the crystal outright. His arm suddenly became charred black with glowing red cracks as he howled in pain and shot out a larger beam of energy. Nature seemed to attack the pair, offended by Foxy's sudden boldness. The wind howled and lashed at Glory's side, nearly knocking her over; the earth tremored in rage, or perhaps even terror.

"Now!" Foxy roared, and Glory ran toward the end of the beam. It suddenly occurred to Foxy that he could keep the beam going. If he did, Glory would jump and be instantly vaporized, and there would be no more problems for the rest of the invasion. That was tempting. VERY tempting. But so was the urge to let go of this crystal and not die today. So, he brought the box to himself and jammed the crystal into it, slamming the case shut. The beam stopped just as Glory got to the portal and dove in. The portal closed in a matter of moments, and the creature, satisfied with its catch, also retreated back as the fissures faded away.

Twisted sent the crystal back into the receptible and then passed out from exhaustion.

Glory, however, did not pass out. She was delved into total darkness. If there was a light source in this vast space, it wasn't doing a great job. This room gave Glory a strange feeling, a tingling on the tips of her horns as if they were antennas emitting some kind of special signal that only this room had access to.

Suddenly, she was no longer in the dark room, but in another realm

of darkness. It was Pyhhria, but at the same time, it was so different. She was at the entrance of JMA, looking out at the charred and rocky land. Creatures stumbled around the hellscape, their top half scavenger-like, but their bottom half a tail that ended in a barb, moving around by the spider legs that sprouted from it's spine. The monsters had pitched black skin and no eyes, just a massive, gaping mouth with razor sharp teeth.

"We call them Grievers," Foxy said, sauntering up beside Glory. "They're genetically modified to be mindless monsters that tear apart everything in sight. But the thing was, they just kept attacking our troops. It was an animal, it didn't recognize friends or foes, only food. We managed to program our scent into them, so they can tell who's who by smell, but they still attacked anyone they *saw*. So, we just..." He brought a hand up to the side of his face, and made a gesture of stretching his skin across his eyes. The Queen's stomach churned.

"Where is everyone?" Glory demanded. "Where's Deathbringer, wheres-"

Twisted stretched out his arm, and a moment later an object a bit larger than his head shot into his hand. He threw it over to Glory. "Here he is," Foxy said cooly. The rainwing caught it but then threw it to the floor, resisting the urge to barf all over Deathbringer's skull, chunks of meat and blood still attached. Foxy grabbed Glory's soldier and pulled her side against his. He smelt awful, like burnt rotten flesh. She gagged as he forced the Queen to pan around the scene in front of her.

"Take a long, hard, look," Foxy said in a proud tone, "take in every detail; the lack of life, the dead dragon skulls everywhere, the smell." *Of a thousand lost showers,* Glory thought bitterly. "And just... take it in. I'll wait."

He waited for a moment, and despite herself, she did. She watched as the abominations walked what was once her home. She guessed that every one of her friends were dead. All the queens, everyone she loved. So why had he left her alive?

Because it's not real! Glory scolded herself.

"Not yet," Foxy said as if responding to her thoughts. Then he turned towards her and forced her to look at him. "THIS! This right here?"-he gestured once again to the vast wasteland, then turned back to look at Glory with malevolent green eyes-"This is my happy ending!"

Preparations

Back in Pyhrria, they had gotten to work. It had already been a day since Glory had left, and Bendy had only gotten closer. All of the queens had gathered and discussed the situation, and how they would gather up recruits. Queen Snowfall had been no help, as expected, but the other queens were quite reasonable. Thorn had suggested that they ask for volunteers instead of forcing anyone to serve, and the other queens agreed.

"But if this creature really is as strong as you say she is," Queen Ruby had said, "then we need to worry about how many troops we have. We can ask for volunteers, but if we don't have enough troops..."

"Then we will deal with that when we get there," Queen Anemone had interjected. "But for now, we need as many volunteers and weapons we can get. I have enchanted a glove that multiplies and enchants everything it touches and used Turtle's bowl to make more. I will give it to whoever will agree to make weapons, and if we win this, I will let you keep it."

"I will do it," Queen Ruby volunteered. "We already have a bunch of weapons in storage from the war."

"The Mudwing's can build cover on the battleground," Queen Moorhen suggested.

"And what will the Icewings do?" Snowfall asked.

"According to our contact, Bendy is susceptible to fire and ice, and you will be our ice. The Icewing's will freeze Bendy to immobilize him, while the Sandwings, Skywings, and Nightwing's will go in for the burn."

The meeting went on for several hours, debating on which tribe would do which job, but eventually, they came to an agreement. Word had spread quickly throughout the continent about the

looming threat on the horizon, that their enemy was not of this world. Rumors began to spread like wildfires.

"I heard that it's a massive scavenger with fire powers!" some would say.

"I heard that it's not a dragon, just a giant rib cage with a head, that's over 400 meters tall!"

"I heard it's just a giant fish that can fit the whole continent in its mouth!"

Yes, these were grown dragons with jobs and families.

But despite the ridiculousness of these claims, the facts were undeniable: something was coming, and preparations were being made.

As preperations were made, someone watched the shadows, though they had no malevolent intent. They were simply there to watch until Glory returned, then they would watch the battle of Bendy, keeping close enough to assist if something went wrong, but not actually revealing themselves; doing may cause unwanted consequences, and the last thing this timeline needed was more stress on its delicate folds. It was incredibly boring, resulting in some minor pranks around the school. Nothing big or reality breaking, but just small things like making Starflight think he misplaced his keys, or tripping Starflight... or... really they've just been messing with Starflight a lot.

However, there were also dragons where you wouldn't expect them to be. Like several thousand feet below Pyhrria, in a Nightmare-made cave system, the walls covered with ink and blood. This was a place where wars never stop. There was no hierarchy down there, there was only a food chain. At the very bottom of this food chain, stood animus, for their powers were rendered useless down here, and most animi don't quite know how to fight since they relied mostly on their magic to protect them. Second to last were the Seawings, since they had no effective natural weapons. Higher up on the food chain were Skywing's and Nightwing's for their fire, Rainwing's for their camouflage and magical death spit, and

Sandwings were in the top three for their fire and poisonous tails. But the final 2 slots? Those were easily taken by what was only known as The Demon, and The Angel.

Now, a hero we all know drew the short straw.

"Keep running," Turtle said, wheezing slightly. His gills had proven useless months ago, unable to do anything but clog up and bleed. He and Heran hurdled over the black veins all over the floor, with 2 other seawings in tow. Turtle had just found her just a couple of days ago and since then, they had traveled together; and when I say travel, I do mean travel. In just a few days, they had run the distance equivalent to running across Pyhrria, East to West coast.

"We need to stop and rest," the female seawing suggested, though she kept running as she spoke. "There's a safe stop just a couple of miles down."

"It's a Sandwing stop," Turtle reminded her. "And the next Seawing stop isn't even within 100 miles."

Of course, "miles" was used as a relative term down there, as there was no indication of how far you were traveling. What was 1 mile one day might be 3 miles the next, but everyone always knew what they meant. It was strange the way it worked; it brought dragons together when their lives were constantly in danger.

There is never much going on down there. It is always running, or being ambushed, maybe watching a dragon you may or may not know die in front of you. Maybe it's you that's dying. But it's always either running or sleeping or dying in one way or another.

The Nightmares have been absolutely dumbfounded while watching Foxy's behavior. I mean, most people would be considering his end goal. His actions have prolonged the mission years now. But they had been instructed to continue the mission and to let Foxy do his thing, and all Nightmares know that if you receive an order from the top, it's in your best interest to follow it. Unless you're Foxy, of course, and are practically the boss' brother and can get away with almost anything. But Foxy always gets the job done, and has fun doing it, so nobody can hold it against him.

In short, all was going well in Pyhrria, except for a few things here and there. But it wouldn't stay that way, not for long. Not long at all.

The Panic Room

Glory had been in the panic room now for about an hour, perhaps more, in which it showed Glory no mercy. It pricked and prodded at her most sensitive areas, exposing fears and insecurities so deep that even Glory didn't know where they came from. The checked her timer, which read **1:39:34**. Glory shrugged and stood up. She couldn't quite remember which fear she was in. She was inside a white metal container. There were no windows or doors, which slightly triggered Glory's claustrophobia, but that was nothing compared to some of the other nightmares.

Suddenly, somewhere in the space around her, she could hear a door unlock. It wasn't unlike the lock that Glory had on her door. A door appeared from seemingly nowhere, and Deathbringer stepped out. At that moment, Glory didn't care if this was trick, she was just thankful for seeing his face again. She kissed him passionately, not caring about what was about to happen, she just finally felt... home. She pulled away when she noticed that he wasn't kissing back, and her heart dropped when she saw the same neutral look on his face that she had seen on many of her friends at this point.

"Oh," She said, heartbroken. She knew exactly what happened next, but she had never been ready to do it. However, when the knife was drawn, she knew she had too. Deathbringer attempted to stab Glory in the throat, but Glory blocked it by catching his talon. In this particular nightmare, she was much stronger than the dragons attacking her. She knew that the only way to win this nightmare was to kill him, but Glory had never considered it a win. The first two had been Sunny and Starflight. She had tried to reach both of them, with Sunny by talking about her mother, and with Starflight by reciting his favorite verse in his favorite scroll that he used to never shut up about. "Everything with complicated emotions is prone to greed. We will try to live our lives completely deterrent of greed but usually end up going down that path anyway. Often times, we will try to do the right thing, but then say to ourselves *NO! That is what a greedy dragon would do!* And so, we deter from it,

only to face worse, yet less obvious greed. The secret to living a good life is to do the next right thing, whether it is *greedy* or not; or something that works very nearly as well, do what you think is farthest from the dark path."

However, her nerdy speech didn't do the trick either. Starflight had suddenly become much more aggressive, and Glory had been forced to kill him. Glory didn't want to do that to Deathbringer. He always made her feel safe where she was, and if put in the same situation, she knew that he would rather die than have Glory suffer a fate like this. Glory sobbed, throwing Deathbringer onto his back and placing the knife where it would kill him instantly, painlessly. She kissed him deeply, sadly knowing that he couldn't kiss back, and inserted the blade. Deathbringer vanished in Glory's arms, and she huddled over to take a nap.

"Glory!" that was a voice she hadn't heard in a long time. Glory turned over to look at the cheerful, naive Sunny she had known so long ago. "Glory wake up! Webs brought us something new for the library!"

Glory looked straight up, then to the side, then to the other side. She was back under the mountain. Glory actually chuckled. Did they think they could scare her with this? After all of the horrible stuff they put her through, they think that this will phase her? She had forgotten about everything that had happened here.

"Just because you've forgotten doesn't mean you're over it," Sunny said in an ominous voice, before returning to her cheerful self. "Come on! Or else Starlflight will read 'em all and spoil them!"

That did happen sometimes. They would get a whole new delivery of scrolls and Starflight would read them all and assume that the others had read them just as quick, and talk about the super spicy ending of that book Glory currently had her snout in at that moment.

As they went into the reading cave, Glory suddenly remembered that day. It was the day that Webs had put a new map up since Clay had accidentally burned the last one.

I had stayed in bed that day, Glory remembered bitterly. *Like a lazy Rainwing.*

After Webs had finished putting the map up on the wall, he turned around and waved to Glory. "What do you think?"

It was... Glory didn't know what it was, she wasn't even paying attention to the stupid map. She was trying to see exactly what could go wrong at this point. She knew that this was all too perfect. Webs, while the nicest of the 3 guardians, was never nice to Glory, and would never ask for any of the dragonet's opinions.

"Glory?" Sunny tried, waving her talons in front of her face. Glory snapped back into reality and looked up at the map.

"Perfect," Glory said with a fake smile. Webs smiled at her, making her uneasy. Glory had no memory of any of the guardians ever smiling at her.

"Thanks, Glory," Webs said sincerely. "What would we do without you?"

Clay bounded over next to her and intertwined his tail with hers. Glory was much more comfortable with dragon-to-dragon contact now and didn't resist. Also, it was Clay...

No, Glory reminded herself. *It's not him! It's not him!*

The Panic Room had a way of making Glory forget that she was in a simulation, not reality. Suddenly, Kestrel came crashing into the room, knocking over a stack of books. "Sorry."

At that point, the convincingness of the situation slipped away. Kestrel wouldn't apologize to save her life. She would probably offer the dragonets in exchange.

She had this gleam in her eyes that said something like, *FINALLY!*

"She's not dead," Kestrel said breathlessly. "The prophecy lives!"

Everybody's eyes went wide and they all dashed toward the main room, and GLory was left there in a slight daze. What had just

happened? What did she mean *The Prophecy Lives?* The prophecy had always been in motion (or rather, it had never been in motion). Hadn't it? As they left, Kestrel gave Glory a smug look before she left, and Glory followed the group main cave. Standing in the center of the cave was a bright red dragonet with emerald, green eyes. Glory gasped slightly when she saw her. She was beautiful! Everything about her seemed graceful, from the way her wings and tail swayed when she walked to the way she stood at a high, proud posture.

She's my opposite, Glory realized, noticing her own slouch and drooped tail and wings.

"Hi!" She said excitedly. "I'm Glow! It's so nice to meet all of you!"

"Who are you?" Glory asked curiously.

"I'm your Skywing dragonet," her words slapped Glory across the face, making her visibly cringe. The other dragonets ran over to Glow, who's name was even perfect, just like the rest of her. Glory watched as her friends forgot about her completely, giving her up all at once as they welcomed this stranger in her place. Glory wanted to object, but who was she do that? Besides, she had always known that they would get rid of her at some point, hadn't she.

Dune came from nowhere, and grabbed Glory's horns roughly, pulling her over to the underground river. "We don't need you anymore, we have the real one."

Glory struggled against Dune's talons, but her strength advantage that had been present in the other nightmares failed her against a dragon 3x her age. She twisted and looked over at the other dragonets, who were simply standing there. "HELP!"

But they all just looked away uncomfortably, Clay even sidled slightly closer to Glow. Dune shoved Glory underwater and held her there for a few seconds, before bringing her up and smiling at her. "That's a good idea, Kestrel. Let Glory fight for her freedom."

He dropped Glory on the ground, and Glow, without hesitation, ran at her. Glory rolled out of the way, and Glow skidded on her claws

and lunged at Glory again. Glory camouflaged her scales and ducked under Glow then launched herself into their underbelly. Glow flew in the air for a moment, before landing on her back, slightly breathless.

"I don't want to fight you," Glory said, stepping backwards as Glow got up.

"I don't either," Glow said, tearing up. "But this is my prophecy, and I've been left out of it for too long. And by a lazy Rainwing no less!"

That's it, Glory realized, remembering again. *That's what I'm afraid of. That I took the place of somebody who deserves to be in the prophecy.*

Glory uncamouflaged her scales, and looked Glow in the eyes. "That's true," she admitted. "It was your prophecy. It was written with you in it..."

"THEN LET ME HAVE IT BACK!" Glow cried, stalking toward her, but Glory unhinged her jaw and spat venom inches from Glow's talons, stopping her in her tracks.

"But it's mine now," Glory said. "And I deserve it. *I survived the being under the mountain. I'm* the one that saved us from the sky arena. *I'm* the one that saved Starflight from Nightwing's. *I'm* the one that saved Deathbringer from the volcano. *I'm* the one that saved the entire Nightwing tribe from extinction. *I'm* the first Queen to rule over two tribes in the history of Pyrrhia. *I'm* the one that found love. That was *me*. Not *you*."

"What is-" Kestrel tried to say, but Glory shushed her.

"You don't get to speak," Glory told her, then looked her in the eyes. "Because you can't hurt me anymore."

Glory looked around the room, at all of the guardians. "None of you can."

"I'm a Skywing of Destiny!" Glow argued. "All you will ever be is just some Rainwing who happened to get lucky!"

"The prophecy was always fake," Glory said calmly, confidently. "Until we made it real. And that we doesn't include you."

Glow, enraged, ran at Glory and lunged at her. Glory closed her eyes and outstretched her wings. But the impact never came. There was a loud THUD, and Glory opened her eyes to see that Clay had pinned Glow, who was screaming profanities. Clay looked up at Glory with sorry eyes.

"I've never been the best at spelling," Clay admitted. "But I'm sure that there's no Glow in Dragonets of Destiny."

Glory chuckled, and the rooms around her fell away like water, revealing a tiny white room. In front of her, large letters spelt out: Remain calm, you will be treated shortly; place your (then it went on to name different types of hands and talons i.e. tentacles, hands, paws, etc) on the pedestal to your left.

Glory found the pedestal and placed her talon on it. Metal grips locked her in place before she felt a sharp pain as it stabbed a needle into her. Glory fought it at first, but then stopped when she felt some kind of pressure completely relieved. She hadn't even noticed it until it was gone, this pressure that had been pressing down on her brain since she entered the panic room. Glory sighed in relief and laid her head back, ready to take a nap.

A door on her right suddenly opened, and a tranquil turquoise Rainwing stepped into the room with a pleasant smile. "Hello, you must be Glory, come on in." Glory stood up, feeling light-headed after the pressure relief. The other rainwing noticed this and chuckled. "The Panic Room exerts a slight pressure in order to keep its victims from falling asleep," they explained, leading Glory down a small green hallway. "We relieve that pressure the moment they enter this room, as to eliminate all confusion whether this is another simulation."

Glory realized that she hadn't even considered that this might be a trick, that this was all a ruse. But then again, she didn't feel like this was a trick. In the Panic Room, once she remembered that it was a simulation, she usually knew at that moment that it was just that; a simulation. But now, in this place, that feeling was absent.

"This is what we like to call, The Safe Room," the Rainwing went on. "It is a reward for those who complete the Panic Room. We're somewhat of a myth really, with only 7 residents out of an attempted... well, I'd rather not say the number."

They finally arrived at a small reception area. There was a screen like the one in the Nightmare base, the Rainwing went over to the screen. "How large of a room would you like for your stay?"

"What? No, I'm not staying," Glory informed her, looking at her timer. **00:30:00.** "I'm here to pick up something, and need to go as quickly as possible."

"Oh," the Rainwing said, surprised. "Well, what is it that you will need to pick up?"

"I need an antidote to a toxin," Glory told her.

"What caused this Toxin?"

"It was a Toxin on Foxy's hook."

"Could you be more specific? Are there any other names he goes by?"

"Uhm... Twisted."

"Which Toxin?"

Glory blinked once, then again. "What?"

"Over his lifespan, Twisted has used 37,000 different toxins."

"I... I don't... What was his most recent?"

"Standby," the room suddenly transformed into a battlefield, dead bodies piled all around. One person was left fighting Foxy, swinging a large stick. It was some kind of creature Glory hadn't seen before. It had the relative shape of a scavenger, but it had blue and black fur covering its body in various patterns. Foxy suddenly broke the stick and shoved his hook into the creature's stomach, before pulling it out and throwing the creature to the floor, waiting for it

to die. Foxy then knelt down next to it, and bit into the creature, ripping it open and devouring its insides. "Was this the situation in which they were inflicted with poison?"

"This isn't it," Glory assured her, thinking that the fact that the creature was dead would give that away.

"My apologies," the Rainwing said. "Time varies in-between dimensions, so *recent* is a relative term. Please stand by."

Oh moons, Glory thought. *Please hurry... Deathbringer, hang in there.*

Just Checking Up On Things

Preparations had worked out well. All of the queens and tribes had done their part, helping to create cover and weapons. The worry of not having enough soldiers turned out to be a foolish one, the army so large that there was trouble supplying everyone with weapons. So many dragons had fought for decades in order to create what Pyrrhia was today, there was no way they were going to let someone else ruin it again.

Foxy sat in wait, gathering his energy. His arm still hurt slightly from the last time, and he worried that this time the blast may kill him. But he had a plan for that. One of the perks of being a few thousand years old was that you learn to be incredibly resourceful. Foxy has fashioned a new vessel for the crystal, a watch-like device that would allow him to activate the crystal at will. It was like Thanos' gauntlet, except a lot less sweaty and a lot more powerful. It would come in useful later.

"How long?" Winter asked from behind Foxy. Since obtaining the mystic crystal, Twisted had been enjoying his time outside his cage. He hadn't caused any harm, really, but he hadn't exactly been following orders, either. He had been traveling quite a bit over the past few weeks, so he ran into dragons quite a bit.

The first time he had seen Qibli and Winter, they had both tried to murder him... you can imagine how well went...

"3 more hours," Foxy answered. "If she's alive."

"If this doesn't kill you," Winter informed him. "I will personally finish you off."

"You won't," Foxy said matter-of-factly. "It's not possible. This crystal governs the Spectroverse, while you govern a small pen of scavengers. If this crystal can't finish me off, then you most definitely can't. So, you better pray that it does."

Winter stared daggers at Foxy, who stared entire arsenals into Winter. Winter shrugged it off and walked away. *3 more hours.* Foxy thought. *3 hours, then I'll be put back in the cage.* He wasn't going to spend his last hours contemplating his boredom, no. He was going to make sure the pieces were in place before he made another move. He first made a visit to Possibility, then sneakily made his way over to the outskirts of town, where a family of Sandwings was staying for the time being. Foxy found a nice dark alleyway and listened.

"How long will you and the fam be staying in Possibility," a sandwing asked Foxy's target. They were all having a nice barbecue in their backyard, the kids were running around and playing while the adults stood and talked.

"Just about a week," the target, Pyramid, said, confirming Foxy's suspicions. "But we may come back out after that. I brought them all here to increase the kid's diversity, I didn't want to know *only* Sandwings. But with all this Bendy business there's really no one in town to get to know. And those who are, have all locked themselves in their homes. Pheonix is on board with the idea, she loves the city."

"I hear ya," his friends said, and Foxy left, bored with this. The second visit he paid was an old friend. He went over to the Ice Kingdom and found small cave south-east of the palace. He entered slowly until he saw blood on the walls, then began walking normally. At the end of this cave, he found a seawing trembling on the floor, not from the cold, but from fever. The terrified dragoness looked up at Foxy but was much too weak to make any attempt to escape. A red mass separated itself from her and went over to Foxy.

"WHAT?!" Carnage demanded. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Bendy is going to lose," Foxy informed him. "We always knew this, but judging from how prepared the dragons are, I'm starting to worry if all of the necessary dragons will die that day."

Foxy gave Carnage a lense the size of his palm. "This will highlight exactly who needs to die that day. Another target will be more out of the way. In Possibility, there's a sandwing name Pheonix. Kill her

and her two daughters, Quicksand and Sunrise."

"Isn't that Pyramid's family?" Carnage remembered when Foxy wouldn't shut up about them, and how important they would be in their plan. "Just who exactly does he become?"

Foxy grinned evilly. "No one knows, one can only predict."

And at that Foxy left again, off to his next errand, a lab under the ground. A certainnNightwing was fumbling with a computer, still trying to wrap his head around it. They had hired him because he was one of the most brilliant minds in Pyrrhia, and had no problem doing what they call in the biz "f*cked up sh*t" in the name of science; but it would definitely take him a lot of getting used to the Nightmares' advanced technology.

"How is she coming?" Twisted asked.

"I have no way of knowing that," the scientist grumbled. "She won't even be concieved for another two years. How do you even know it's going to be a girl? If what you're saying is true, then there's a high probability that it's going to be a boy."

"It's going to be a girl," Foxy assured him. "Trust me. But what I meant was how are the programs running?"

"The genetic code modifier isn't going to work. I can't figure-"

With just 5 buttons, Foxy solved the equations, and the design was a success. The nightwing stood there in awe, before looking at Foxy bitterly. "I would've figured it out."

"Eventually," Foxy agreed condescendingly. "If you need help, ask your staff."

And then, Foxy was gone again. He made multiple visits, some of which were for fun since he hadn't been out for a while. But once he was done, it was only ten minutes until he would bring her back, and maybe, just maybe, ten minutes before he died.

Ah, Finally Some Wholesome-- Oh Come On!

"Ah, here it is," the Rainwaing said after what seemed like an eternity. "PX-3901, used on Deathbringer from W0F28374901. Is this correct?"

"Yes," Glory groaned. "I need the antidote."

"Of course," the other rainwing pressed a button, and a door appeared. She led Glory to it, into a large room surrounded on both sides by thick glass, behind which were countless vials, each filled with a strange, unnatural-looking fluid. "Here it is. 3 mg for 4 weeks is recommended. This should cover that and more."

"Thank you," Glory said, and began to feel a tingling sensation throughout her scales. She checked the timer. **00:00:23.** Glory wouldn't miss the Panic Room, that was for sure, but she would've liked to learn more about it... Maybe from a distance. But that didn't matter now. She did it. She had conquered her fear, and she had saved Deathbringer.

The timer ticked to zero, and Glory was ripped away. She gripped the vial in her talons to keep it from being ripped away from her. As she went, she looked at saw a beautiful network of red webs against black space. She looked around her in wonder, before feeling as if she was slammed against a brick wall. She breathed in her own air for the first time in hours.

"Glory!" Sunny slammed into Glory, who pushed Sunny away, turned her head, and threw up before accepting Sunny's hug.

"Get this to Deathbringer," Glory said. "Give him 3 mg."

"6!" Foxy gurgled. The Queen watched in terror as his organs spilled from his skeleton, his body burnt to a crisp. "Give him six. We don't have four weeks; we have 3 days. HURRY!"

Her head was still spinning and seeing the fox's disfigured body proved to be the final straw as her brain collapsed under the pressure and she passed out.

~~~~~~~~~~~

She was awoken by gentle lips on her forehead and opened her eyes to see Deathbringer standing above her, smiling gently. She pulled him onto whatever bed she was on and kissed him and hugged him. Every molecule of her body was connected to his in a tight embrace. She never wanted to let him go again, she just wanted to stay intertwined with him forever, relishing this feeling of intense relief. "You're alive!"

"More or less," he grunted, trying to uncoil himself from the rainwing's prison of affection. "I wasn't so sure about you for a while. You just slept for 20 hours."

"How are you feeling?" Glory asked. "Any negative side effects?"

"It burns," Deathbringer admitted. "But I guess that's to be expected from something like this."

Glory checked his shoulder, which was scarred badly and probably would be for the rest of his life. But it was healing, and that's what mattered.

"I missed you," Glory admitted, pressing herself into his chest. "You can't pull stuff like that, Deathbringer. You can't try to fight Foxy, he's too strong."

"I know," Deathbringer said, kissing her. "I won't anymore... Foxy's back in his cage, and he's going to stay there. We took the crystal. Anemone enchanted it to hide where no one will ever find it, not even us."

"Good. No one deserves that much power."

They laid there for a moment in silence, just enjoying each other's company. In an ideal world, they'd be like this forever; no drama, no Nightmares... but that was not the reality... "Bendy will be here in 2 days. The armies are all lining up. We're ready."
~~~~~~~~~~~